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HENRY ACTON

OR

THE GOLD SMUGGLERS

AND OTHER TALES.

BY

THE HON. LOUISA SAYERS.

"Sometimes fair truth in fiction we disguise—
Sometimes present her naked to men's eyes."

TRANSLATION FROM HÆTOD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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AGNES DORVILLE;

OR,

FIRST LOVE.

ARRIVED in town, change and novelty of course had much charm in drawing my young mind from regrets and recollections ; and indeed when I recal the avidity and delight I experienced at all this change and novelty, I almost fear that I must have been but a heartless being.

The splendour of Mrs. Elton's mansion and establishment charmed and astonished me at first. I was surprised at the little excitement it awakened in the quiet Mrs. Stewart. All was certainly very unlike Copsewood cottage, with its rustic porch clustered and darkened

with eglantine and clematis, scenting the air with rich perfume. Its smooth velvet lawn decorated with the brilliant hues of dahlias and rhododendrons, the stealing waters of the Severn laving its sloping banks, the not far distant Malvern hills and their changing shadows, now hid and now seen through the sheltering shrubbery that skirted Mrs. Stewart's little domain, giving finish to the scene. Then the hall, with fancy chairs and flower-baskets, profuse with every shade that makes the garden gay, the rustic litter of a country cottage and of its country sports; the neat maid, with snowy cap and apron, and modest courtesy of welcome—all—all—how different in their simplicity and homeliness, from the high flight of steps, the cold broad pavement, the Grecian portico and extended portals, the crested chairs, and polished stove. Then the powdered lackeys and stately porter. Still greater was the contrast when I thought of the reception rooms,—but with this thought came the tears, as I dwelt on the jocund

hours I had passed in those of Copsewood. The low beamed ceilings, the windows of unimprisoned freedom opening on the lawn, the roses luxuriantly twining round the veranda, like the happy hearts within, unchecked in all their sportive wildness. Then the furniture, endeared by the hand which had either worked or presented it. Every picture the tracery of some loved one,—every book and every instrument the source of sympathetic communion, with a thousand odds and ends of domestic usefulness. But if in Mrs. Elton's mansion my inexperience was dazzled, my feelings were listless. Mine was the captivation of sense, but not of heart. My eye rested on alabaster vases and statues of minute and exquisite workmanship, marble slabs, china glittering in gaudy colours, loungers of velvet, chairs of embroidery, pale rose curtains of the richest silk, carpets as if treading on down, blooming exotics half veiled beneath transparent draperies of net-work, tables of inlaid mosaic strewn with a thousand idle bijoux.

teries, shewy albums, games, prints, and caricatures, instruments for display, paintings glittering in massive frames. I was soon wearied with all this show and glare, and the unceasing multiplying of all this, and myself, as on either side each and all was reflected in the long pier glasses; and I remember saying to dear Mrs. Stewart, "If one's friends see as much of us as we do of ourselves in these rooms, they would soon get tired of us,—I am quite tired of myself."

"Agnes," said Mrs. Stewart, warmly, "how I hope that the weariness you now feel in this princely mansion may never extend beyond this mere personal reflection. May you never, while lounging amidst this downy indolence, forget all the activity and usefulness of your youthful home."

"Forget you all!" my cheek crimsoned at the supposition; yet have I lived to weep over its realization.

"Yes, Agnes," continued Mrs. Stewart; "even you may learn to know what it is to be

unjust to yourself, and cease to prize this own pure heart of yours for its best and truest uprightness; even you, Agnes, may value life for its baubles,—may yet sigh over them when possessed, and, when too late, throw them from you like an angry child, vainly asking to obtain new ones to gratify your idleness,—may find you have too long reposed on down to seek rest on aught less luxuriant. But remember, and let no persuasion ever obliterate the conviction, that of our hearts you can never complain, as you have done to-day of these mirrors; the oftener your image is reflected there, the more it will be prized and loved.”

Bêloved Ellen Stewart! she kissed my tears away, and told me to call her a false prophetess. Would to Heaven she had proved so; but simple-minded as she was, yet was Ellen Stewart’s judgment unerring. She soon left me, after which I felt all this but a splendid imprisonment. I could not run in and out, and sing free as the birds of the air, with a bonnet or no bon-

net, as my fancy led me ; could not go forth, and breathe the fresh air of Heaven, and gather my nosegays, feed my pets, and wander amidst woods and fields.

Then the punctilio of dress. In a week I was perfectly metamorphosed ; my wild and profuse ringlets were frizzed into the last new fashion ; my figure squeezed and furbelowed. I remember absolutely staring at myself as if at some stranger, as I looked in the *cheval* glass in my dressing-room, and beheld myself reflected there from head to foot.

It was on the evening I was to make my first appearance at a ball given by Mrs. Dorville in honour of my arrival. Madame Nanette, the French maid, who was nominated to instruct my utter ignorance with regard to the toilet, uttered long and vehement compliments on the change and improvement. I was *charmante* beyond expression ; it was all a *merveille* ; my whole attire was *tout à fait élégante*. Shall I own I again looked in the mirror—that a con-

scious blush arose—and that I did feel that if Clarence saw me, perhaps he would say,—“ Agnes, you look beautiful !” It was his favourite colour, white, I was attired in. Muslin, till this night, had been my only dress ; but this was composed of the richest satin and tulle, ornamented with superb blonde, and bunches of white roses and lilies. The bodice was tight, and, as Nanette said, “ *d’un gout charmant.*”

My hair, as was then the fashion, but which had never been mine—as at Copsewood cottage it hung down in ringlets on my shoulders—was now drawn up in full bows and curls. My only ornament was a string of pearls, with a locket set in brilliants, the gift of my brother, which contained his and the hair of my dear friends of Copsewood. I looked on it before Nanette clasped it round my throat, fondly pressed it to my lips, and felt the tears from my eyes fall on it.

“ Do not,” said Nanette, “ let yourself be *fachée* for those away ; think only of those

AGNES DORVILLE; OR,

who are here at present, and who will say, Mademoiselle Agnes is *belle, superbe, ravissante*. But you must not let Mademoiselle Dorville see the *grands messieurs* think only of you."

"Miss Dorville," I replied, "appears very kind and good natured."

"Yes, she is; but she has the *envie sans doute*."

I cannot say that Nanette won much upon me either by her advice or her warning. Her countenance, too, was one which had not pleased me, though that of a pretty lively-looking little Frenchwoman. Her eye fell when you fixed yours on her countenance, and she had a quick shuffling way of evading an answer to what she wished to conceal. But all these observations soon passed from my mind till after circumstances recalled them.

When I met Mrs. Elton in the drawing-room, she expressed, with Nanette, equal satisfaction at my appearance. Short as had been my knowledge of Mrs. Elton, her perfect lady-like

demeanor, her bland courtesy, had gained every thing on my young and inexperienced affection, notwithstanding the first impression I had drawn from her letter of doubt and distrust.

Mrs. Elton was a woman who caught you on the first approach, and whose worldly tact was certain to retain you. She was now somewhat *passée*, yet nothing was wanting to render her still a very fine woman; more she could never have been, even in youth. And Mrs. Elton at five-and-forty was perhaps as handsome as at five-and-twenty. Her eyes were brilliant; her hair rich and luxuriant; her skin, which must have been always colourless, at night, and with the setting-off of borrowed bloom, looked still beautifully fair. The rest of her features were neither regular nor striking. Her mouth had an expression far from pleasing, as it did not appear natural when she smiled. The lips were thin and compressed; but her figure, movement, and dress, were perfectly those of a woman who had ever moved in the highest

circles of fashion. Unlike many of ton, her manners won instantaneously; not so much from their elegance as their perfect *empressement*. The happy ease of entering into your ideas and feelings, the ever bending, forming, to those around her rather than asking anything from them towards herself, won her golden opinions. It had all the seeming of amiability in it—it was not the reality.

Yet I know not how it was, but you ever found yourself yielding to her—committing and trusting to her your thoughts and feelings, while her thoughts and feelings were ever concealed. You could seldom even guess at them. She never appeared to dictate to me, then but a child, yet she regulated every movement. There was an appealing, a beseeching about Mrs. Elton, that was quite irresistible.

I never so fully felt the meaning of the word fascination as when with her, and under her influence. Though delighted, charmed, still at times I had a doubt. I perhaps loved her, con-

fided to her without confidence, yielded to her without conviction. This night she won on me powerfully ;—how often do vanity and self-love prove the opiate of discernment ! How oft do they prove the Delilah which has shorn us of all our strength.

Let it be remembered, Mrs. Elton was a deep-read woman of the world, I but just sixteen ; unlettered in all its knowledge ; ignorant of all its motives and selfishness ; inexperienced in all its aims and ends—aims and ends so often trifling that we can only wonder how rational beings can give either time or thought to their obtaining. We would sometimes tremble could we behold the darkness in which their possession but too frequently terminates. Their victims, like her of Khorassan, have the veil raised only to shudder and to weep at beholding that which it has so long concealed.

Something new in London, and, indeed, in all other societies, ever brings charms with it. Mrs. Elton was vain, perhaps I should say, very

vain. Food for her vanity was not always to be obtained; she loved, even through another, to be an *object* in whatever circle she mingled. She now contemplated, by my introduction, to create a sensation—a sensation which she, at least, was the means of causing. From her satisfaction, I doubt not but she imagined she had succeeded. Whether from my unhackneyed manner, or from the loud proclaims of my reputed charms, I know not; but I could not be either insensible or blind to the evident interest this my first appearance excited; and I must confess that, though young and unversed in flattery, my spirit did bask in this first sunshine of adulation. I felt the blush of gratification on my cheek, and the gleam of joy in my eye; but all was excitement. I seemed at once some enchanted being; all around bearing, to my warmed imagination, the aspect of fairy work, and I the presiding genius.

The light, the decoration, the music, the

beauty and dress of the fair women, the elegance, the fashion of the men, and the splendour of the highly-ornamented reception rooms of a London assembly, all bore to my untaught eye the richness of oriental magnificence, and, intoxicated, delighted, I entered into the amusement so absorbed, that all feeling of awkward timidity, which might have marred my powers of pleasing had I been in a less brilliant scene, seemed to be obliterated.

Anna and Mrs. Dorville were all smiles; still the latter was far from winning on me as her sister Mrs. Elton had done. Anna I still admired, though she appeared a very different character from the Anna of Copsewood Cottage. In a London drawing-room she was the off-handed, dashing, handsome, showy girl of heartless fashion, rattled and talked of Clarence as my rustic swain; said, "He would make his fortune if he shewed but his handsome face here. Think of his brilliancy amongst these faded creatures; why, they look as if old Pluto

had been giving them warning to prepare for a row over the Styx ;” and she whispered, “ Child, you must give over that ugly trick of blushing.”

“ Beg pardon, my lord,” as she turned to a quiet, gentlemanly-looking young man she was leaning upon, “ I forgot you and all your raptures in my own ; but I make the *amende honorable*. I will do all I can to assist you in rivalling Clarence, not from selfishness, in truth, Agnes, do not look so flurried ; we are never agitated in town ; we only *feel* in the vulgar country. The Marquis St. Aubin—Miss Agnes Dorville—bless me, it ought to have been reversed. Well, I was so full of his lordship’s merits, which you do not know, while he has already seen all yours, that I was only thinking (behind the scenes, please you, my lord) of the heir to forty thousand a year—the magnet of every mamma’s and daughter’s speculation ; and—and—but really, my lord, I will spare you, as I see you are determined to come on the stage,” and gently withdrawing her arm from Lord St.

Aubin's, she went away laughing, with a tone that sounded somewhat unlike what was her usual one, saying, "Mind, do not too suddenly prove the frozen point to our London magnet. I should not like to see so fair a cousin's face blackened by poison or strangulation."

Had Anna Dorville acted this part by one more experienced, it would have led to the desired result; but as I was perfectly innocent of the slightest speculation, I took it all in mere badinage. But I had yet to read Anna Dorville aright.

Doubtless the very means she had taken was the very one to counteract her own artifices with a man like Lord St. Aubin, who had passed through the ordeal of several London seasons. He saw at once that I was perfectly harmless of any intention of attracting him, which, being so seldom the case, at first, his vanity urged him to make me the object of his devoted attention for that evening. His attentions I received, as I did all others, with pleasure, but certainly

unimpressed with any manner of feeling. Half I listened to as mere nonsense ; the more serious compliments I fear I but too often laughed at—rather to avoid accepting them as they were meant than to encourage or seek for more.

Though on this evening Lord St. Aubin had been my shadow, watching every movement if I danced with another, and by my side the moment I was disengaged, I never gave him a thought on my return home ; I looked on the dear group of Copsewood Cottage hung over my dressing-room chimney-piece, and then fell asleep, thinking, “ nothing like Clarence Stewart was there to-night.”

Some short period after this we spent another evening at the Dorville’s ; and on the following morning, a late hour saw Mrs. Elton and myself at the breakfast-table. When she entered the room, I was fully intent on a letter which had arrived from Mrs. Stewart. How the tone of it struck me ; so different from that which had vibrated on my ear the evening

before. I saw it in all its contrast of purity and chastity. I felt the warm tears blinding me. Again I caught a sight of the writing of Clarence; and a rush of joy made me brush them from my eyes to look upon that dear hand. It was at this moment Mrs. Elton entered. I neither heard nor saw her, till, gently tapping me on the shoulder, she said, "What, Agnes, not one word, one look, but for the absent?"

"Yes, yes, dear Mrs. Elton," for I felt as if I could love everybody and everything, so much joy was in my heart, as I read the fond words before me.

"A pleasing letter, I judge, Agnes, from your beaming countenance."

"Indeed, delightful; for it tells me all are happy and well at Copsewood."

"Happy, and you not there!"

The keen eye of Mrs. Elton was questioning me ten times deeper than her words. With a flushed cheek, I replied, "Yes, for if they were not so, they are so little selfish they would not pain me

by telling me; they think I am so, and they are content."

"They are excellent people, I am sure," but as she continued, I did not like the tone of her voice. "I should be delighted to have them to enliven you, Agnes." I felt hurt as she spoke on. "You know we are always from childhood hearing what sacrifices the heart must make when once called into the active sphere of the world and its society; sacrifices to its prejudices, to its rules, its etiquettes. 'Act well your part, there all the honour lies,' be that part whate'er it may, is the world's motto. Still we must always feel, Agnes, when once embarked in it, that we are the most dependent of human beings; we must sail with its tides and tack with its winds; every cord that moves our rigging must be regulated and worked according to its own science, or we should soon find ourselves but a wreck. It is not our own impulses, but the impulses of others, that is to direct us, though, doubtless, we are ignorant from whom or whence we draw our code."

“ This is sad bondage, then, this world of fashion, dear Mrs. Elton ? ”

“ And where is not bondage, Agnes ? Is it not all bondage, from the cradle to the grave ? and believe me, no bondage like the bondage of mere affection, or the bondage of our own whims and fancies. I have tried them all ; but since I have entered into the court of what is denominated the world, the jury, which there pronounces a verdict, have not, as I have experienced, been directed by mere private opinion, but by such evidences as certain rules and points of law have proved to be just and fitting.”

“ But, dear Mrs. Elton, you seem by this to imply that kindness and attention to the Stewarts would militate against these Medes and Persian laws you are telling me of.” This was rather, perhaps, a pert reply ; but Mrs. Elton went on with her appealing manner :—

“ Agnes, dearest, your judgment is shrewd, shrewd beyond your years. You have had little more than six weeks to judge of what I have

been saying; let me ask you, have you not made similar observation?"

"Yes, certainly; I do think the society of town does appear somewhat parrot-like."

"I see you have not looked on in vain."

"I fear, as far as refers to self, I am little advanced in wishes to follow the old adage, 'birds of a feather flock together.'"

"Then you do not enjoy being with me?" and there was something so affectionate, so conciliating, in Mrs. Elton's tone and manner, that I jumped up, and putting my arms round her neck, kissed her with all my heart and soul.

"Yes, yes, I do; you are so kind, so very kind, that I could not be otherwise than happy with you. You could not think I thought you like those parrot people I alluded to."

"In outward semblance I am, dear Agnes; I have taken wing with them, and with them I must flock."

"And must all who flock with you be like them?" I asked, still affectionately leaning on

her shoulder. "What will you do with my naughty self?"

"Why, clip those wings, and never, never part with my sweet Agnes. We must talk more seriously about asking the Stewarts to come to us."

"But we shall never make parrots of them," I said.

"Nor the parrots like them either, Agnes. But come, we promised to meet Anna to take her to the morning concert. Will you put on your white chip bonnet, Agnes?"

"Anything you wish, dear Mrs. Elton."

Away I bounded, happy with a thousand images of pleasant but confused thoughts. As Nanette handed me the bonnet, she said, "Ma foi! but Mademoiselle Anna did so coax for this joli chapeau. Oh qu'il vous va comme une ange!"

"And you did not refuse the pattern, did you, Nanette?"

"Pourquoi non? My Lor St. Aubin said

that lovely demoiselle is your cousin, and I shall see her to-night, but no with that jolie chapeau."

"But how came you to know all this, Nanette? and where could Lord St. Aubin have seen me or my bonnet?"

"Dans une voiture."

"That is no answer, Nanette."

"Ma foi, dans le parc, donc; but she would not give him de introduction, though I tell you, mademoiselle, she has had de introduction for elle meme."

I did now remember having seen a fashionable-looking young man, who had several times ridden up and talked to Anna when we had been driving; but I had generally been so amused at the novelty of the objects around me, and had so little remarked his features, that I did not, till this moment, recall them in Lord St. Aubin.

When we arrived at Mrs. Dorville's house in B—— Square, they were both overwhelming in

their histories of my powers of fascination and the conquests I had made.

“ I told them,” said Anna, “ they had only seen you, but when they had once heard your wild free notes, it would never cost them a guinea for opera or concert again, could they but win your compliance to make a show-off. So on Saturday we are to have quite a squalini of it with Lord St. Aubin and Clairville. Did you observe Clairville ?” This I thought rather a singular question, as Anna had introduced him ; but she went on in her unstopping way,— “ that dark, deep, Byron-looking personage at the D.’s. I forgot, he twirled you in a valze till you were pale again, and then said, you reminded him of a night-blowing Ceres ; but here he comes. Clairville, Miss Dorville says she did not observe you last evening, but still she wishes to know why you compared her to a night-blowing Ceres.”

“ I had the pleasure of observing Lord Clairville, Lord St. Aubin’s brother,” and I

extended my hand to him. I felt annoyed at Anna's apparent effort to render me ridiculous, so I continued,—“ I will save Lord Clairville from an explanation. Vanity has whispered it, my Lord. But why not say, like angels' visits, few and far between. Don't tremble for me, Anna; though considered at present a *rara avis*, one season will see me no more a wonder than my fairer companions.”

“ You see, my Lord,” replied Mrs. Elton, “ Miss Dorville is not to be spoiled; she knows her own value too well.”

“ I thought,” said Anna, “ humility was a virtue, but vanity seems to take its place in your estimate, aunt.”

“ Self-esteem is not vanity,” replied Lord Clairville, his generally pale and indifferent countenance brightening in a moment. “ And it is a pity we have not oftener lovely ones so well justified to hold that self-esteem.”

“ That you might have the satisfaction of destroying it, I suppose,” said Anne.

“No; gold is never injured by trial,” replied Lord Clairville.

Lord Clairville was a year younger than his brother, and every way his superior. He was, as Anna said, Byron looking—not from any personal resemblance, but from an apparent depth and loneliness that gave the mind an interest in him. A sort of ideal character, not arising so much from the sentiments he uttered as from those he would if he could have concealed. An *ennuyée* manner, yet not resulting from satiety, but from sentiment. A soul that worked powerfully within, but not of sufficient buoyancy to give lifelike animation to its natural capabilities. Talents high and lofty, but allowed to slumber beneath the stillness of unawakened or undirected ambition. The feeling of such a soul was intense when roused, but the every-day murmur only touched on its strings to pass without an answer—but once struck, the sound was deep and powerful. In my after observations of Lord Clairville, he

ever reminded me of a splendid waterfall,—we behold the deep smooth liquid steal on unruffled in apparent listlessness to its brink, and then suddenly plunge headlong into activity, and brightness, and animation,—nor can it find again its home of placidity, but on it frets ; once roused, it stills not soon again.

But I have wandered. Let me now go back to the morning concert, where the immortal Braham and the Siren Stephens enchanted all ears. To the music, Clairville was all attention, apparently absorbed. Unfortunately, I was seated next Lord St. Aubin. He never allowed me for a moment to listen. But I forgot, not only him, but all good manners, when Braham burst forth in all his splendour and power,—it seemed as if I had never heard the human voice in song before. Lord St. Aubin said something to me ; I could not bear the interruption, and without even turning to him for an instant, I covered my ear with my hand to shut out the sound of his voice. I doubt whether

I should have been conscious of my rudeness, had I not happened to catch Lord Clairville's eye; he smiled, and did the same with his hand. I looked around, though not till after the sounds from the orchestra had ceased,—I made an apology to Lord St. Aubin; but in vain I offered it; in vain I endeavoured to conciliate him; and when we were leaving the concert room, he passed by me, offering his arm to Anna.

“Will your brother ever forgive my innocent rashness? He forgets what a novice I am; I never heard Braham till to-day. Can't you excuse me?” said I to Lord Clairville.

“Excuse you, Miss Dorville!”

“Then,” said I, “you were as enraptured as myself?” I looked up and beheld Lord Clairville's fine countenance illuminated with animation.

“Ten thousand times more! but I see you don't understand me,” and he smiled.

I did understand him—but I did not want

either a lover or a flirt in Lord Clairville ; though he was the only one I had yet met in London in whom I felt a confidence, or a feeling of communion.

“ Yes, I do—but do let me flatter myself, and do not say so many idle things to me ; for do you know, I think you the most rational being I have met since I left home, but not rational according to the London dictionary.”

“ I thank you for the last clause ; but you said home ; where is your home ?—is it not at Mrs. Elton’s ?”

Anna, who overheard this question, replied for me.

“ No, no ; *her* home is a precious casket—’tis Agnes’ jewel-case, and in it is *one* jewel beyond all price.”

“ Is not, or rather ought not, such to be all our homes ?” said Clairville.

“ St. Aubin, listen, listen ; Clairville is absolutely thinking and talking sentiment in a London assemblage.”

She whispered something to St. Aubin; I just caught the words "younger brother." I saw Clairville's eye rest for a moment on my crimsoned cheek when Anna first spoke. He saw she had more meaning than merely met the ear, and that it distressed me. I could not but feel grateful for the quick manner he retorted on her, and then as quickly turned to indifferent subjects.

I went home delighted with Clairville, saying, his is just like Clarence's consideration; and disliking St. Aubin, because he had just done what Clarence would not have done; so shaped and formed, even from girlhood, was my estimate of character from that one so loved in all its beautiful perfection. The opera was to be the scene of our next meeting that evening.

"Do," said Clairville, "allow me to be seated next you at this your first opera; for all are wonders yet to thee; though you may stand among us, you are not of us."

"And are there no wonders for you?"

“None, but the delightful one to meet a being so fresh and natural as yourself, Miss Dorville.”

“Surely, then, if you do value me for what you say you do, I must think that, though among them, you are not in heart one of the London world.”

“I was not so two years ago, and almost doubt my change since I have met you.”

“Say not it requires but two short years to make us one of those puppets of mimicry—things without mind to think, or heart to feel.”

“How strange you should have seen so much in so little space,” said he.

“No, not in the least; for the change to me, for quickness of transition, has been as great as if I had been transported in a moment from the sunny skies of Italian land to the cold climates of Russian ice. Think how I must have stared and observed all about me.”

“What delightful excitement! I love extremes; yet, as Lord Byron tells us, there is ice

at both poles, and all extremes are the same," said Lord Clairville.

I replied, "However we may idolize Byron for giving us the poetry of life, we must not seek him as a guide for rational existence, when he tells us, all existence,—that is, absolute existence, is but the summer of a dormouse."

"Pardon me, but I almost doubt whether he does not say true; for go we not groping and moping amidst the dark dull things of everyday life, more to opiate our days into nights than to count our time?"

"Yes, indeed; if we look for excitement as the essence of happiness, I fear, Lord Clairville, we shall find we have only extracted the opiate to deaden our best capabilities, our best affections."

"How I should like to know more of this jewel home of yours;—will you tell me some day?"

"Yes, I will; for I think you were born to enjoy such a home."

Passing on to the carriage, he kindly shook

my hands, saying, “ *Au revoir*; do not deny my *first* request.”

Lord St. Aubin bowed stiffly, and that harsh glance was still visible in his usually lively eye. The moment we were seated in the carriage, Anna said, “ Aunt, how can you allow Agnes to be so vulgar.”

“ Vulgar, Anna,—I saw nothing half so *distinguée*.”

“ Thank you, dear Mrs. Elton.”

“ I do not care, but I persist Agnes has been guilty of the vulgarity of a school-girl; partaking of the sweets first, and then intending to go to the substantials afterwards.”

“ Excuse me, Anna,” I said, in perfect wonder,—‘partaking of the sweets first, and leaving the substantials till the last,’ what can you mean?”

“ Why, what do you call the younger and elder brother but the sweets and the substantials—the sweet and substantial,—but I, like you, have reversed the order, vulgarly forgetting *etiquette*.”

“ Ah, it now strikes me, Anna ; I did, I am sorry to say, forget the rules of *etiquette*. ”

“ Yet, I do not know,” said Mrs. Elton, “ I think if I have to tax any one on the transgression of good manners, it must fall on you, Anna.”

“ Yes, a little coarse, but no less true ; mine is only in word, Agnes’ in deed. Never did such a thing in my life—never heard of such an act, except, perhaps, in the days of Esau and Jacob ! ”

“ You allude, Anna, to my breach of politeness with regard to Lord St. Aubin.”

I then mentioned how rudely I had repulsed him. Mrs. Elton’s keen eye was for a moment fixed on me, but as quickly withdrawn. “ Never mind, my dear, all shall be set right,” and no more was said, though I thought Anna looked vexed, but it was not easy to find out what Anna either felt or looked ; she had such a perfect command of herself.

Just before I went to dress for dinner, I met Nanette on the stairs. A note was in her

hand, directed to Lord St. Aubin. At that moment I thought nothing of it; but in now looking back o'er a chain of circumstances, I can here trace up the scheme to which they led to the first moment of its possible conception; and the happiness, nay, perhaps, eternal welfare, of how many were involved!

This is a sad dovetail world. What creatures of dependence are we, walking on the green sward recklessly, while underneath may be the future grave where all shall crumble and moulder into nothing. The very clouds of golden glory which play around a brilliant sun-set betoken but too often the morrow's storm.

Nanette, when she made her appearance in my chamber, had an unusual manner of bustle about her. I was to put on the attire she selected. "But, Nanette, I would dress for the opera after dinner." "No, Mademoiselle must dress now;" so not caring much about the matter, I obeyed Nanette's commands.

"There, that will do," as she settled and

resettled my hair ; “ oh ma foi, but you are very lovely ; but Madam begged me not to let you be trop tard, descendez donc, vous êtes coiffée à ravir.”

And gaily humming, I went almost dancing into the drawing-room, but started when I found it occupied by Lord St. Aubin alone. I own I felt somewhat of awkwardness. I knew not whether to extend my hand, or meet him as we parted ; but he was the first to advance, and with an altered look and manner, said, “ Let me not silence that sweet song, nor check that joyous look and step, Miss Dorville.”

“ Then you pardon my unfashionable enthusiasm, do you, my lord ?”

“ Rather let *me* sue for pardon ; even more than pardon—perfect forgetfulness.”

“ Your suit is granted,” I replied, and I looked up in Lord St. Aubin’s face to give him full assurance, and, for the first time, I really thought him handsome.

“ May I say something in vindication ?” said Lord St. Aubin.

“Why should the injured plead? but perhaps you are going to do so for the guilty, and offer excuses for one who has not even had the ingenuousness to volunteer one herself.”

“No,” said Lord St. Aubin; “I am no such Quixote. I should say, the power of giving me offence is like the gun in the hands of the sportsman, wounding according to the person who may draw the trigger, rather than by what it is loaded with.”

“Then certainly not one feather ought to have dropped. I can safely plead ignorance and innocence in the mischief I wrought. I, perhaps, laid something of a stress on my words, for I recalled Anna’s sarcasm.”

“Yet no aim could have been so certain in *every way*,” said Lord St. Aubin.

“But your lordship now credits I did it ignorantly?”

“Certainly.”

“Thanks; I see your lordship’s mercy well in your correction. You see I am in my novitiate,—

all ignorance,—and you kindly pity and would instruct me; your lenity and lesson shall not be forgotten. I will keep my hands in their proper places. Think how good of you to throw a veil over my novitiate, that I may be admitted as one of those perfect beings, those veiled ones, without the toil of experience,” I added, though Lord St. Aubin did not take my meaning, for I would have implied *worldly* perfection.”

“ I hate perfection,” said Lord St. Aubin.

“ Indeed,” I returned.

“ Yes, so unlike oneself,” he said; “ they can have no sympathy with poor erring mortals.”

“ Then it is to your lordship’s love of imperfection, and not to your admiration of perfection, that I am indebted for this merciful pardon and instruction; so I deemed.”

“ Perfection,” he replied, “ is that with which we can find no fault;” and as he leant over the table at which I was seated, turning over the leaves of a print book, as a seeming occupation,—for I must confess I felt awkward,

unused as I was to entertain a stranger without additional resources than my own,—at this moment, to a more experienced observer than myself, Lord St. Aubin would have looked but what he was—the devoted lover. To me he appeared but talking the mere badinage of a man of idleness to one he thought silly enough to listen and answer ; but now when I recall how I sat with my eyes fixed upon the pictures to avoid his anxious and delighted looks, I must have appeared as if I understood him *rather as the lover than the idler* ; but it was not so. He continued,—

“I said I hated perfection ; I think I belied myself, for that is perfection which is superior, yet unlike all and everything I ever met, and never till this moment realized.” He gently pulled the book away. “Come, I must turn schoolmaster again ; don’t waste your looks on that senseless print.”

“No, you must not have my book ; I cannot talk unless I have it before me.”

“Well, here. Now what were you going to say ?”

“ To say ! Oh ! your lordship was defining miracles, defining something quite out of the course of nature ; but do you know that is not the mere word my vanity accepts ?—I love the compliment in act more than word. I like to see power give proof of influence. And your good nature has shewn what a conqueror I have been—for I consider easy offence and anger at trifles is all grounded in self-love, and I see,” I said, smiling, “ I have driven all that bad spirit from its stronghold. I would rather work a miracle than be a miracle.”

“ But Le Bruyere, is it not ? has told us, all our best affections and actions are the offspring of *l'amour propre*, so, you see, you may trace it to a pure source after all. And would you, then, wish to subdue *l'amour*——”

“ *L'amour !*” interrupted Anna, as she crept on tiptoe into the room, and peeping over my shoulder, looked up into my face. “ The word is expressed without a sound. Hamlet has been here, or I would give you a lesson. Come,

Agnes, come, my Lord, let us have another rehearsal;—come, you are the actors, I am Hamlet. Why, let me see—the second, no, the third lesson, and you so perfect, Agnes ! I did not think, child, you were able to lisp yet, and I find you at *L*. Well, how near is *M*. But did you never stop a moment, my Lord, at *D*,—*D* for desperation, as reading made easy has it ?—and *D* for something else, Agnes, but the knowledge of that you have by instinct, child.”

I was provoked, but I was determined not to allow Anna to see it ; I could perceive the same dark spirit passing over Lord St. Aubin’s before radiant countenance, as he raised himself from his leaning posture on the table, and walking away, looked at Anna.

“ Actors, Miss Dorville ! change the number, —let it be singular.”

“ Feminine gender, singular number, aye, my Lord. Why, what are we all, and always, but actors—actresses ?”

“Actresses indeed !” and Lord St. Aubin’s lip curled with contempt.

Anna saw she had said, or rather done, too much, and seating herself at the table, turned over the books, humming an Italian air with the most perfect nonchalance.

I looked over and smiled at Lord St. Aubin’s ridiculous anger, and said, “So the miracle worker is powerless after all—but a Pharaoh’s magician”—he was at my side in a minute.

“Say not so,” said he; “what rouses me now,” and he leant down and spoke scarcely above a whisper, — “is that artful working against one who has but too little of the Le Bruyere’s principle — and therefore cannot feel its depth, because she is superior to its motives ?”

But Anna was not to be abashed. “What, my Lord—still talking of *l’amour propre* ?”

I looked at Lord St. Aubin, to beseech him not to call down Anna’s attack again. He

understood me; for with a quiet, though evidently forced manner, he turned round and said to her—"Do you deem, with Le Bruyere, that all the best feelings and actions spring from it?"

"Decidedly," answered Anna.

"Then where is principle?—do we never do right but to benefit self?" I asked.

"Never,—but in the conviction that right will bring its reward."

"But suppose it can only work good for others—"

"Then we look to them for gratification,—we would not do so if we did not love them," argued Anna.

"Not always that either, for had we not often rather pain ourselves than those we love? Surely then, must we not love others better than we love ourselves?" I asked.

"But where dwells that love? for after all affections are like county dinners. I'll give you dinner for dinner—no more. The scales must

be quite even, or I will have none of it," replied Anna.

"That sort of affection, indeed, you define, is the offspring of self-love ; but the one is as little like true hospitality as the other is genuine regard. I cannot say the mere sympathy of reciprocally excited affection I value much."

"Then you would not love *because* you were beloved?"

"Certainly not wholly, for I must cease to feel affection the moment I cease to estimate."

"What would you do, my little girl, were you married, as all Cupid's votaries marry, blind—and in a year or so find yourself, like Voltaire's valet de chambre, in the servitude of no hero, but a real man, one given to all sorts of misdemeanors?"

"Sufficiently erring, I suppose you mean, to destroy all esteem?"

"Why, in that case, I am certain I should cease to love him, however he might love me—do my duty and be miserable; but that duty

would not spring from self-love, for it would be a painful task."

"The idea, my Lord, of that beaming face looking mournful and sad !—why, child, you look as if born for all the fun and frolic of life. But, my dear, we have no Brobdignags of perfection here, you have left them all in W——."

I perceived Lord St. Aubin's glance turn directly to me as she spoke, as if to see whether her allusion had any particular meaning. I felt it had, and as usual, it called the colour quickly into my face, but as if careless of that, she continued,—“Wait till you have seen a few unsophisticated, downright mortals, and then we will reason about estimation and affection.”

“Surely such knowledge would not improve any one's reasoning powers by your account of it ; for I never yet heard, to take the lesser merit instead of the higher one could extend our views on any subject,” said Lord St. Aubin.

“My Lord, it might after all be like our good

port in this country, rather the better for its adulteration."

"That comparison will scarcely stand, for I doubt," replied Lord St. Aubin, "if that is not an acquired taste, and therefore most probably a false one."

"I see your drift. Yet clowns do not fall in love with duchesses. And why?—for the very reason that we should not fall in love with angels if they visited us on earth. Mortality loves mortality, and Agnes will, no doubt, esteem her admirer as fondly for his devotion as for his perfections. You men do not bear to be microscoped. If we only loved one another for our perfections, what would become of you and me, my Lord? I would hie me to a nunnery, and you, I suppose, to La Trappe, and dig you a grave without talking about it."

"Anna, you can talk one's opinions so over that we scarcely remember what has been said; but I think I did not say *perfection* was necessary to excite affection, for, as you say, what

would become of one's self? Yet I still hold, to love only because we are loved is as humbling as the search of the other would be vain."

"Well, if you come to the passion of love, I tell you what I think it always puts me in mind of—a watch ; as long as we women have the key to touch certain springs, otherwise fancies and whims, all goes tick tick by our side ; once lose that, or give one turn too much, it stops or snaps, and whiz it goes."

I looked at Anna, and thought how could she utter intentionally such a heedless thing, for I saw she was in earnest. But the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Elton ; and dinner being soon after announced, we descended to the *salle à manger*. For Anna's strange and bold manner, I could not account. Was there a deeper motive than I could dive into in all this idle nonsense? or was she, as Nanette, who had known her from a child, hinted, jealous, and envious? Yet she appeared to award me all, and more than was my due.

Several circumstances put together made me, however, come to the conclusion, that Lord St. Aubin was the source of her late singular and sarcastic manner towards myself. But I felt particularly unambitious to be her rival; and I now determined to avoid his idle compliments and attentions, for certainly I looked on them in no other light. I never deemed for an instant that that which I conceived originated merely from manner could be a wild, vivid, impassioned affection for a being of whose mind or heart he could know nothing. Surely such sudden and flashing affection can never vivify where it falls; but like the rays of a tropical sun, destroy but too often what a milder clime would gladden and nourish.

I anxiously but in vain endeavoured not to excite Anna's jealousy, and so tried to place myself at the opera that I might not interfere with her; but neither Lord St. Aubin nor Mrs. Elton allowed my plans to be executed, for he would seat himself between Mrs. Elton and myself, and nowhere else.

I was sorry when I saw Lord Clairville enter shortly after, as I preferred him much to his brother; but he got a station behind my chair, and leaning over it, he said,—“ So you would not grant my request?”

“ It was not, indeed, that I *would not*.”

“ Was it not, indeed?” repeated he, in a delightful tone. “ Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable. If so, I have had my reward.”

I was struck with Lord Clairville's pointed manner. Did he at first think, because I was so placed, that I was indeed guilty of what Anna had alluded to in the morning, and that now I was speculating on the elder brother? I turned my head quite round that I might see the expression of his countenance, as I said, “ Did you doubt my ‘ would not’?” But I saw he did not, though he only answered me by a smile of assurance. Not for a moment did all this strike me as likely to bear a different construction in the mind of Lord Clairville than an eagerness to impress him with my perfect indifference of, and absence of all speculation on,

his elder brother ; not that such an idea could have entered into my mind of being suspected of such a design, save for Anna's remarks of the morning. But I had yet to learn that Clairville's estimation of me was as exalting as Anna's was humbling. Every thing around me was forgotten when the music poured forth its voluptuous swell.

The thrilling strains of Pasta came like the incense of inspiration, making the world a very paradise of delicious sounds ; she looked the being of another creation, peopling the rapt imagination with images not of earthly mould, with strains not of earthly song. Now space seemed to be filled with the deep full richness of her voice ; now she hurried on with passionate impulse to give agony in all its hollow hoarseness, changing, till in each change the expression of every passion became vivified into absolute existence.

Again that voice became soft as whispering

angels, or like the sound of silver lutes stealing over sleeping waters, so sweet, so lucid, I hushed my own breathing, lest the dying cadence should be lost in air; but like some saintly spirit it passed away, we know not whither; yet how exquisite the stillness as memory yet held a momentary link with its expired vibration! "Whoever turned to earth" after such excitement "without repining"? I almost started when Clairville addressed me with, "I have not been disappointed. I have seen the opera many a time and oft; but never witnessed such perfect enjoyment as yours, Miss Dorville. I have almost felt selfish enough to be envious. I would have given worlds to have felt all you have felt."

"One thing I can inform you of, Clairville," said Anna, "being an adept in Lavater," and she lowered her voice, "that if you have been envious, there is one not far off whose feelings are something very like."

“ Anna Dorville, what enigma now am I to read ?”

“ Why—what year were you born in ?”

“ Really, as young ladies say, I never talk of such things.”

“ Suppose I was to turn fortuneteller, and offer to cast Lord St. Aubin’s and your nativity.”

“ Why, I should make my best bow ; and what think you ?

“ Not refuse ?”

“ Yes, positively.”

“ Why ? is it because I should have to tell you, you were born one year after his lordship ?”

“ Pshaw ! is that all my fortune ?” and with an air of perfect nonchalance, he turned from her, and began a lively conversation with his brother.

I had certainly heard all Anna had said, but affected ignorance. I well knew Clairville, too, perceived I had done so, nor could I but admire his good-natured tact.

The ballet commenced. My eye at first was electrified with wonder and admiration, by the fairy vision picturing the houri paradise of a Turkish dream, or giving creation to the magic tales of an Arabian night's fabling. It was but the first gush of light, and show, and brilliancy, and I turned from the exhibition. I was young and innocent; still I felt the blush on my cheek, a feeling of humility, too, when I beheld the fair forms seemingly forgetful of all that woman owes herself.

I knew nothing of crime or error then. I had been brought up, as it were, amidst the fresh and morning air; but I was beginning to feel that amidst the breath and hum of busy day, the atmosphere of life is not that pure and holy thing; and that the vapoury exhalations are everywhere around the footsteps of those who would walk along the peopled ways of this world.

How frequently have I, in after days, turned to the first-awakened feelings of disgust at this

scenic representation, and wondered at what I *then* was, and what I am *now*. How clearly can I trace my footfalls, darkening as they passed from out that land, "pure as unsunned snow." I turned from the stage with thoughts and feelings unharmed; but still certainly more conscious of wrong. Yet, strange to say, all, save Clairville, appeared now as much absorbed as they had been indifferent during the opera.

To Clairville then I turned. I listened to his conversation with delighted satisfaction. His mind was of that elastic quickness which bounded from subject to subject, without resting on any one sufficiently long to feel its weight; yet were his thoughts drawn from sources of deep and cultivated materials. While he charmed with his powers of brilliancy, he never weakened by his flippancy. Though impassioned, he was never overwrought. I was happy, too, to find he abstained from all idle compliment, and that his attentions were more

the result of regard than admiration. In him I was glad to find a relief from his brother's marked, unceasing devotions, though I could perceive Mrs. Elton was determined not to lose sight of her speculation on Lord St. Aubin, but as soon as she discovered that her plans were guessed at, she directly changed them.

Clairville was now always invited with his brother. No manœuvring was to be seen to throw me in Lord St. Aubin's way, and to distance Clairville. On my part, I avoided the one as a lover, and sought the other as a friend. But so guarded had Mrs. Elton's conduct become that, save for a sort of understanding I marked between her and St. Aubin, and Anna's badinage, I was beginning to think the scheme was given up. Had not my affections been devoted, I may say from infancy, to Clarence Stewart, I might have loved Clairville with woman's fondest love—but never St. Aubin. His passion was all vehemence ; the sudden dark changes of his quick temper terrified and

alarmed me ; and the very blindness with which he gave his love seemed to betoken but fickleness and uncertainty. He ever seemed acting from impulse, and that impulse but too often the dictates of selfishness. It may appear strange in one so young and inexperienced, that observations should be thus awakened ; but many of them were the result of what passing circumstances lead to, rather than what arose from them, as they took place. They were bitter in their character, and overwhelming in their influence, I have lived to feel that I was their victim, and to mourn and to weep that e'er we were in fellowship. Another reason, perhaps, why I caught at many of the apparent concealed motives of those around me was, that from my earliest recollection I had been taught to think and observe. Mrs. Stewart never allowed our minds to slumber over the minutest subject which might call observation forth. Every opinion was elicited with watchful anxiety, and corrected

with tender care; but while corrected, never checked. It was a correction that threw us back on ourselves. From the powers of our own judgment she demanded justice, not sentence of condemnation from hers. Often has she said to us, "Do not do so and so, or do not think so and so, unless you can give a good reason for doing it, my dear children."

Thus had I ever been accustomed to examine not alone my own mind; but I became anxious to know why others acted or thought differently, inasmuch as I had been taught not to act without inquiry. With regard to countenance, I was, I fear, a perfect enthusiast. It guided me to a fault. It was a map to which I looked for every thought, feeling, and power. Yet why should I boast of observation when I recall how I became the slave of deception? When I turn back to reflect on the characters of those who guided and worked on me, I start to think how I could have wandered

on in such delusion ; it appears as if I had lived in a phantasmagoria, and now only viewed them by the light of truth. But I anticipate. To say I was not a joyous partaker of the splendours and adulation that courted my young fancy, would be to take a merit and strength I had no claim to. I was captivated, excited—nay, better, calmer, wiser feelings were hushed by the syren lullaby of flattery and deception,—and, perhaps, like the painter of old, I threw a veil over all I dared not define. Suitors came ;—I laughed at their folly and rejected them, for my heart still daily breathed its dearest thoughts and best feelings to the smiling group of Copsewood ; and little Clary, Stewart's last gift, shared my fondest caresses. Sometimes, too, even amidst all this hum of gay and stirring life, would I steal from its sound, and weep, though, perhaps, not in sorrow, for there was something sweet in those tears as I dwelt upon those loved ones ; and with Clary, my sole companion, have I talked

as if my words were understood by the faithful creature; when it witnessed my tears, I have often checked them to still its agony of look, as it would sit gazing up into my face, and then, when I dried them, and patted the fond creature, how it would gambol and rejoice. It was the only living thing with me that seemed to belong to my own dear home. All its tender, watchful ways brought back days gone by. In after years, too, from poor Clary have I drawn that sympathy which I dared not ask from aught else.

The London season was now drawing to a close. The speculative were flying to other regions to prosecute new schemes; the disappointed, to seek an antidote in forgetfulness or other views; the weary, excitement; the sick, health; and the happy, pleasure. Mrs. Elton, perhaps, came under the latter denomination at present. A variety of gay watering places were named; at last, she fixed upon T——, as some very old friends were to meet us there.

The Dorvilles were to go for sometime into Worcestershire, and then join us. Lord St. Aubin and Clairville were to come round also in their yacht and meet us. In short, we were to be excessively delightful ; but still I envied Anna. She would only be a few miles from Copsewood ; but she was to write and tell me *everything*.

Two or three weeks previous to the day destined for our departure, Anna, Clairville and myself, were singing together ; I was certainly all heart and interest in the music, for Clairville's voice was one of peculiar attraction, — deep, rich, and powerful, like his mind. It seemed, indeed, as if his soul was breathing in it. On a sudden, I heard a most unmusical jar on my ear ; it was the cry of Clary. I forgot song and all, and flew down stairs. The poor little animal had been bitten by Clairville's dog, which had followed its master, and was reposing in the hall when Clary disturbed its slumbers. I soon returned,

but not to renew my song, for Clary was sadly hurt. I burst out crying when I perceived it, and was certainly not very gentle in my invectives against Rollo. But I was ashamed of myself the next moment, when I perceived the pain I had given Clairville. He threatened poor Rollo's life, and, I feared, was going to put his threat into execution.

“Don't, don't punish the poor creature for my foolish nonsense ; but I do so love dear little Clary that I forgot Rollo was your dog.”

There was something very painful in looking at Clairville's countenance,—it was agitated ; yet it was not anger, but agony I read in it. He left the room ; and as I did so too, I heard Anna say to her mother, “What an idiot !—what a coquette !” But notwithstanding, I followed, saying, “Lord Clairville, pray, pray stop one moment.” I knew not why, but I felt distressed. He turned round. I laid one hand on his arm, while I held poor Clary in the other. He stood, but he did not speak ; he was pale,

and I could feel the trembling of his frame. "See," I at last said, though I scarcely knew what I did say, "do not hurt Rollo; Clary is quite happy now in my arms."

Shall I ever forget the *eye* of Lord Clairville as he fixed it on me? Had it been in anger, had I read aught but what I did in it, I could have borne it; but it told me even before he uttered the bitter words, "Agnes, I cannot speak now." His cold hand rested on mine. His deep, dark eye, full of kindness, of suffering, and of fondness, still was bent on my face, I could not turn from it.

"Agnes, may I see you once again? though I feel I am wretched, wretched beyond a hope."

"Yes, yes," I replied, "if you wish it." He paused, pressed my hand, and added, "I can refuse you nothing; Rollo is safe," and he was gone.

I stood forgetful of Clary and of everything, but I heard Anna's step, and I ran to my own room, and how I wept!—Clairville was wretched,

and I had been the cause ! How could I doubt it. Had I seen he loved me ?—sometimes I had, but the thought had passed away, for till this moment words of love had never been spoken ; but so acute were my feelings, so far beyond all I had before known of painful ones, that I almost doubted my own truth and faith to Clarence Stewart. But no ; it was a sister's warmest, purest love I gave, and that indeed was all your own, valued Clairville. I did not leave my room till I heard the last dinner bell. Lord St. Aubin and the Dorvilles were to dine with us, and we were then to return with them to a musical party at Mrs. Dorville's. At dinner, as usual, Anna made me the subject of her nonsense.

“ Agnes, those pretty eyes of yours have been weeping so long over the wrongs and wounds they witnessed in the morning, that I fear the tale must be a sad one they will tell to-night to Rollo's master. Let me see ; have I got it all right ? Rollo is his master's dog.

Clary the dog of his mistress. It is puzzling, I declare, like the riddle of ‘that boy’s father was my father’s son.’ Come, you seem all very dull. Read the riddle well,—you, my Lord—what relations were they?”

“What relations, Anna! How can you be so ridiculous?”

“Now I dare say St. Aubin will never guess it. Clairville will, I know: he was always reckoned cleverer than you,—was he not, my Lord?”

“And most justly,” replied Lord St. Aubin, affectionately and proudly.

“Well, you are a noble lord thus to bend submissive to a younger brother; but never mind, perhaps the humble shall be exalted. But I wish you would have the triumph of guessing the riddle before he tells it to you,—I cannot think how you can be so stupid. Do just give his Lordship a hint, Agnes.”

“His Lordship appears perfectly satisfied with his ignorance,” said I.

“The old quotation no doubt, ‘where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.’ ”

“Certainly in cases of riddles,” I replied, “the wisdom of them at best is generally but folly. I never guessed one in my life.”

“Did you think there was nothing but folly in the *one* you had solved to you this morning?” and that unpleasant, half-suppressed sneer was on Anna’s countenance.

“An unexpected revelation, no doubt ; never thought it bore such a serious meaning,—never thought what relation *attention* was to love, nor love to him who solved the riddle.”

“You are now, indeed,” said Lord St. Aubin, “dealing in riddles,” as he looked at Anna with an inquiring eye, evidently perfectly in the dark as to what she was aiming at.

“No, my lord ; only shewing its point : first, attention was the grandfather ; then came love, his son ; and last of all came the solver, his grandson.”

I felt my face glow, and indeed the tears

almost came to my eyes ; but I restrained them, for to shew what I felt would have betrayed more than I wished, so I only laughed, and said, “ You have quite *riddled* the *riddle*, now bury its ashes pray, Anna.” Still she would not leave me.

“ I declare Agnes has been guilty of a pun. Only think, Lord St. Aubin, Miss Dorville found guilty of a double meaning ; but I forgot, —you wish it to be buried. Who is to be chief mourner ?”

“ Why certainly yourself, Anna ; for no one else appears interested in the matter.”

“ The matter had better rest, I think,” said Mrs. Elton.

Mrs. Elton, I saw, had caught at Anna’s meaning : and whether it arose from Anna having said anything about what had occurred in the morning with Lord Clairville, or whether from a wish to appear indifferent, so as to elicit something more from his brother, I could not decide ; but she turned to Lord St. Aubin, and said,

“ I am sorry Clairville was so ceremonious as to think about not being in time for dinner ; half an hour would have made no difference. We are always so happy to see him ; but I hope we shall have that pleasure this evening.”

“ I scarcely know ; he appeared decidedly out of sorts to-day ; indeed, latterly, I have fancied Clairville not at all like himself. He was never meant for an inactive, good-for-nothing life like mine. I have been urging him to come forward for the borough of M——, in Kent. It is just vacant, and I tell him I will stand all the damage. Would he not speak well, Miss Agnes Dorville ? You have such power over him, I wish you would exert a little of it. Do talk to him to-night about it, and I will go and call for him, and tell him you have something to say.”

Anna absolutely laughed. Lord St. Aubin looked at her in astonishment, and perhaps with something of the same feeling at me. My cheeks were crimson, and I could not, if I had *had* worlds given me, have answered immediately.

But Lord St. Aubin filled up the pause as he added, "I forgot; you said the other day, women should never meddle in politics."

"Perhaps she would make herself an exception," said Anna, "not to save a nation, but a fine young man from dying of *ennui*."

I know not how it was, but Anna's sarcasms always roused me. I recovered myself; but I forgot in answering Lord St. Aubin what Clairville might draw from such a sentiment.

"Yet into politics, I think, if connected with Lord Clairville, I should enter readily; and, indeed, such decided talents as his ought not be thrown away, as you say, amidst the *idleness* of an idle life."

"Thank you, Miss Dorville; I love to hear Clairville judged of rightly,—so few understand, or value him. I must rouse him by telling him all this."

"No doubt such sounds from such a bell will boom as powerful as Great Tom of Oxford ever did," said Anna, "to wake the dormant energies

of Clairville ; give note of such wondrous public benefit—such happy private good—and no doubt Lord Clairville will turn showman on the hustings to please a well-paid mob ! But then the private good ;—I should like to have more to do with that,” continued Anna. “I should like Lord St. Aubin to have us all down to St. Aubin Hall to swell the triumph. Only think how well Agnes and I should look covered all over with Tory blue. Such open house, such dancing. Agnes will be a second Duchess of Devonshire, and the triumphant member master of *all*.”

“I wish we could realize it,” said Lord St. Aubin.

“What ! turning Agnes into a Duchess ! or making the member master of *all* ! The first I know Clairville would not like, and the latter you would be outrageous at.”

“I cannot see that,” said St. Aubin.

“No, I know you can’t.”

“You are at your riddles again I suppose ?”

“But *you* won’t read them.”

“ Well, perhaps when Clairville is member, you will be made to do so. Talent and a seat in the House have often won—I was going to say—a heart as quickly as rank and fortune.”

“ I am still in darkness. I know of no heart that Clairville would wish to win that he could not, without his being a senator.”

“ Nor does Miss Anna Dorville, St. Aubin. But come, Anna, we will leave Clairville to decide these matters himself,” said Mrs. Elton, and she rose to retire to the drawing-room.

How sincerely did I hope Clairville would not be at Mrs. Dorville's. After what had passed, I did not wish to meet him among so many strangers. The love of Clairville was so unlike the love which any other had offered me that, even while I could not return it, I felt it was a sacred thing. To say I did not prize it would not be true, but for worlds I would not wound it. I even felt a sorrowing that I could not bid him love on. I felt like one who would possess some sweet, dear treasure,

yet shrinks from the wish that it might be hers, from the consciousness that she neither deserves nor should desire to retain it. I wept that Clairville loved me; yet forgive my woman's heart—my pride of weakness;—my thoughts would come and bring a pleasing, nay, a delightful feeling with them, when they told me of the love of Clairville. We had not long left the dining-room when Lord St. Aubin followed us, and ringing for his carriage, said he was going to call for Clairville.

Oh! that I could have said—"do not tell him what I said—do not say I want to speak to him;" but how could I do either? Anna was smiling scornfully. Mrs. Elton was watching me. I dared not say, "let me remain at home;" besides, that would not alter anything Lord St. Aubin might tell his brother.

When we entered Miss Dorville's rooms, it was very early; no guests were arrived. I watched anxiously, but Clairville or Lord St. Aubin did not make their appearance. At last,

I sat down to sing. I had just commenced when I saw Clairville enter, leaning on his brother. Lord St. Aubin stopped to speak to Anna. Clairville walked up directly to the piano; he stood behind me. I tried to preserve my voice from tremor. I felt Mrs. Elton's eye was watching me. I could not overcome myself, and rising from the piano, I burst into tears. My arm was linked in his in a moment as he said, "Had not Miss Dorville better come into the air; the heat has overcome her?"

I was so confused I knew not what I did. The anteroom was vacant. Mrs. Elton followed me. Lord Clairville took me to the window and opened it. Mrs. Elton said, "I will get you some *sal volatile*, my dear child."

We were left alone. I still leant on the arm of Clairville. Both were silent. I could not speak; I felt it impossible. At last, Clairville said, "What, what am I to think? For another moment such as this—If it be madness—let me live on, madly, blindly."

I had not an instant to answer; Anna, Lord St. Aubin, and Mrs. Elton, were beside us.

“Come, come, you foolish thing,” said Mrs. Elton, affectionately kissing my forehead; “will you be good enough to tell Mrs. Dorville, Lord Clairville, that we will return presently.”

“No, no; I would rather go home if you will allow me.”

“Nonsense, you must not go, dearest Agnes,” said Anna.

“Shall I inquire for the carriage?—but no, you are well now; I will tell Mrs. Dorville so,—shall I?” and Lord Clairville released my arm from his.

“Come,” said Anna, “let us go into my little sanctuary; perhaps the guitar won’t be so overpowering as the grand piano;” and Anna, Lord St. Aubin, and myself, retired into Anna’s *boudoir*, while Mrs. Elton went back to the music-room.

“I do not think we shall be able to get up a conversation *à l’instant*, so I will sing or play—what?—ah! ‘The Spanish Retreat.’”

She played brilliantly. I know not how it was, but there was something of power about Anna Dorville that you could never long feel that she had wounded you. She could call you back at will, and throw her spells around you. She had been playing some time when Lord Clairville returned to us ; and Anna, striking the guitar, began “ See the conquering hero comes.”

“ Yes ; come sit down here, while we talk over this electioneering business.”

“ You rude creature—talk while I sing ?”

“ Yes, even so ; for with two such advocates as the Misses Dorville, I am sure to succeed.”

Lord Clairville had seated himself beside me. I was placed on a low Ottoman, some distance from Anna and St. Aubin, and stooping down, Clairville said, “ Agnes.” I felt my heart beat as his soft, low voice pronounced the name, and I felt Clairville was under far, far different impressions than such as I ought to have permitted.

“ Agnes,” he said, “ shall I go to-morrow with St. Aubin?”

I could not tell him it was nothing to me, as I ought to have done. Something seemed to prompt me not to do so ; for I thought “ he would never come forward if I do not urge him.” But why did I not justly question under what impression he would receive my answer, as I replied, “ Yes, Clairville, you ought to go”?

“ Is it your wish ?”

“ It is, indeed.”

What had I done?—what had I implied? Could I mistake the flush and joy of Clairville’s countenance as, in a louder voice, he turned to his brother, and said, “ Well, St. Aubin, shall we start to-morrow ?”

“ No, it must not be to-morrow, but to-night. The day of nomination is to-morrow. We must be at M—— at six o’clock, as I learnt just before I came here,” said Lord St. Aubin. Lord St. Aubin looked at his watch; “ It is just one o’clock I suppose ; we must be off. Do you not think so, Miss Dorville ?”

Again appealed to, what could I do? Delays certainly are dangerous; I felt them to be so, for doubtless, the confusion and agitation of my manner at this moment rather strengthened than weakened the hopes of Clairville. We returned directly to the company. I took Clairville's proffered arm again, but both were so agitated that neither spoke as we passed from one room to the other. As soon as St. Aubin saw Mrs. Elton, he said, "Well, Miss Dorville has won the day. Clairville and I are off this moment; only come to ask for your kind wishes; and I am going to add a still greater request, that you will all come down to St. Aubin Hall, and help us with your exertions. Do you not second me, Clairville?"

I did not attempt to lift my eyes up to look at Clairville, for I felt with what rapture he spoke as he replied, "Mrs. Elton must not refuse, for I am determined to make it the condition of my going at all."

“What say you, Agnes? would you like it?” asked Mrs. Elton.

I hesitated.

“Don’t, don’t hesitate,” said Clairville; “remember my determination.”

“Yes, you must say, you shall say, you will come,” said St. Aubin, in his most vehement manner.

“Well, if I must and shall, what redress have I?”

“Then you would like it?” asked Mrs. Elton again.

“Certainly, if you wish it, and no doubt Anna does; but why not look upon my wish, dear Mrs. Elton, as a mere secondary consideration?”

“But suppose we think proper to look upon it as the first,” said St. Aubin.

“Why Agnes, I know, will accept the compliment, and repay it as it deserves; is not that it?”

“Then we shall see you the day after to-

morrow," said St. Aubin, "together with Mrs. and Miss Dorville; but I will go and make my compliments to them, and then, Clairville, we must make a start."

Clairville was not going with his brother to do the civil to Anna and her mother; but St. Aubin said, "Come, I suppose you mean me to have all the fag while you have all the pleasure."

Reluctantly Clairville left my side, and bidding Mrs. Dorville and Anna good bye, with the promise of their accompanying us to St. Aubin, they returned for a minute to Mrs. Elton and myself. Lord Clairville whispered, as St. Aubin was speaking to Mrs. Elton, "It will seem an age till we meet Agnes;" and warmly pressing my hand, said, "Farewell."

I was stupified, and scarcely heard what St. Aubin was saying about his happiness and delight at our coming down to Kent. When I returned home and reflected upon my weakness, I felt wretched. At one moment I thought I was involved beyond retreat. Again I con-

sidered whether I should not write to Clairville and explain everything; but how do that? Had he said sufficient to warrant my taking such a step? Should I consult Anna?—I felt Anna was not a sincere friend. I had not time to write to Mrs. Stewart and receive her advice, and I fell asleep with a feeling of despondency that it was too late to retreat. I was conscious, indeed, that I had done a wrong, for I dared not look on the picture of my friends at Copsewood, as I was wont, with a happy heart. Till this night it had smiled on me, and, like a talisman, had seemed to charm all sorrow far away.

At breakfast I thought Mrs. Elton was unusually grave and silent. At last she said, “Agnes, I almost repent having given our consent to visit St. Aubin Hall. What do you think of it? Have you really any particular wish to go?”

“No, indeed,” I replied, hoping Mrs. Elton was about to give it up; “I should much prefer staying in London.”

Mrs. Elton paused and seemed thoughtful.

“Prefer staying in London ; are you sincere ? Sincerity is a valuable quality ; never part with it, Agnes.”

What could she mean ? for I knew Mrs. Elton too well not to be aware she pointed at something. She could not be alluding to my conduct towards Clairville, for of that no one was informed ; it rested within my own heart.

“Why do you doubt my sincerity ?”

“I do not exactly doubt it, Agnes ; but I never had to conjecture about your actions till yesterday ; you are so open-hearted ; so perfectly simple-minded.”

“What, dear Mrs. Elton, do you allude to ?”
I felt my heart beat as I waited her reply.

“May I ask one question ?” said Mrs. Elton.

“Who has a right to do so if you have not ?”

“Then I may. Is Lord Clairville more to you than his brother ?”

“I prefer him certainly.”

Now the keen eye of Mrs. Elton seemed to search my very thoughts as I continued.

“ But I prefer him only in deeming him superior to Lord St. Aubin in every respect.”

“ Not as a lover ?” repeated Mrs. Elton, half smiling.

“ No, I can assure you. Do not doubt my sincerity.”

“ Indeed, I do not *now*. I own I did, but it was only a momentary doubt. I shall go to St. Aubin Hall now with a happy mind. Clairville is not the man to make my Agnes the husband I would wish to see her united to.”

I made no reply, for I felt that I had not acted with my usual openness towards Mrs. Elton, and was therefore delighted to avoid her scrutiny. Not but that I would have communicated every word of Clairville’s conversation of yesterday, but I did not feel justified in doing so, as far as he was concerned.

Early the next morning we were on our road to St. Aubin Hall, and the evening saw us

within that princely mansion. Lords St. Aubin and Clairville were standing waiting our arrival under the lofty portico. How well do I recall this the first hour that I beheld St. Aubin Hall ! It was a lovely evening in July ; every tint was warm and glowing as a poet's dream, or a young heart's picturings. The large sheet of water which spread its ample bosom in front of the green velvet lawn was unruffled, for not even a summer's softest sigh was breathing on tree or flower. It glittered a sheet of liquid light, as the slanting sunbeams, painting the fleecy clouds with gold, were smiling their lingering good-night ; like the last adieus of fond ones whispering the promise of to-morrow's joyous return. One little skiff lay sleeping beneath the cool and feathery shade of some weeping willows, —its white sails set ; while the proud swan seemed to repose in quietness and languor, as unbroken as the reflected shadows that were pillowed on the lake's glassy surface ; all so hushed, so motionless, you *felt* its stillness.

It was that lulling, sweet silence which speaks when words dare not, for they cannot paint the images which conscious sympathy may trace.

St. Aubin Hall was one of those splendid mansions that tell of England's wealth, her glory, and her pride, the noble dwelling of aristocratic ancestry. The building itself was of no decided character. Extended wings, an ornamented centre, adorned with high flights of broad steps, and a portico of rich stone-work ; all accorded well with the wide domain and fine wooded park, undulating and varying at every turn and point of view. The deer were now reclining beneath the green luxuriance of the outspreading oak, which the forefathers of a long line of boasted ancestry had planted ; but they had passed away like the seasons which these bold patriarchs of the soil had weathered ; and untouched by storm, unscathed by Heaven's lightning, unharmed by earth's visitations, were now reviving in fresh vigour to welcome the returning summer.

The eyes which had watched and the hand which had planted were no more, while they stood mementoes of man's mortality. Yet they spoke, too, of worldly weal, and gave a stamp of nobility to the whole scene. It was, indeed, altogether a beautiful English sylvan picture. As we emerged from the long, deep, gothic embowerings of the avenue, the whole came forward to the eye, glowing in the reflected lights of a sunset gorgeous, but mellowed as a Claude's tinting,—all complete in their character; the mansion, the lake, the massive timber, the reposing cattle, and the distant hills; all were wrapt in that purple misty veiling of a summer's eve, softening, but not overshadowing; like some bright spirit, even in death, betokening an undying light, like the dreamy pensiveness of soothing, though undefined thoughts. But more life-stirring scenes awaited us within this courtly mansion, where all was in unison with its lordly exterior.

As Lord St. Aubin led us through its

splendid hall and reception rooms, I was guilty of even expressing my wonder and admiration as I looked around on the Eastern-like magnificence of the furniture, the splendid cabinets, the gilded chairs, the loungers of crimson velvet, curtains of the same materials, with gold fringes and massive cornices, veiling windows of painted glass; walls fluted with white and crimson satin, on which hung masterpieces of art, suspended by gold poles and chain; on every side were statues and Italian marbles. Refinement, wealth, and luxury, had united their stores to decorate. Art and science had lent their aid to adorn and delight. Nature, too, had yielded her sweetness; her loveliest flowers were there.

I stood for some minutes looking around me with newly awakened delight. I at last perceived how deeply Lord St. Aubin was observing me.

“Do not be shocked at this plebeian display of wonder; or if you are, remember it is in one who has never beheld more refinement than the

gaudy decorations of a London saloon; has never been before within one of England's proud dwellings. Yet I do not think I am looking at all around me now as an idle child would at a mere toy. I think I am carrying my mind into all the great sources from whence such splendour as this springs. Do not think I look upon all as the mere show of objects, certainly beautiful enough to be admired for themselves; they bear to me a greater charm. I look upon them as an Englishwoman ought, I think, to look, as telling of what cultivation, what sentiment, what taste, adorns her country." But I checked myself, and said, "These are thoughts and feelings as much out of place, perhaps, as my plebeian admiration."

"Say not so, think not so; I should not have experienced all the delight I have done from your pleasure if I had thought it was otherwise; and should not feel all I at this moment feel; feel I could forego all this splendour to realize ——"

I laughed off what I knew this would mean.

“Why, my Lord, what have you not realized here? For my part, I am sure Cinderella just alighted from her mouse-drawn pumpkin never gaped, nor stared, nor wondered, as I do at this moment.”

“Then if that is the part you are about to act,” said Anna, who had just entered with the rest of our party, and caught part of my words, “pray let us know, before the witching hour may dissolve the spell.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Elton, who was now always on the watch to counteract Anna’s mischief, “I think, as we have arrived so late, we must indeed guard against the cruellest of spirits, which is time; and make ourselves more fitting inmates for this splendid abode. Why, St. Aubin, it is perfect fairy-land.”

As we were passing up stairs, Anna said, with more than her usual spite, “Take care if the slipper is dropped, that it falls into the right hand.”

“Fear not, it is there already,” replied I, and

nodding, we parted to circuit, in opposite direction, half a mile of corridor.

Nanette was all raptures. “*Ma foi*, what a beautiful *Comtesse* you would be, *ma chère demoiselle*.”

Everything in my chamber was looked at and admired; but on opening a silver filigree dressing-box, she held up a bunch of blue and silver forget-me-nots, confined with a knot of ribbon of the same colour. I took them, and perceived worked round the ribbon which bound them, “Neglect me, and I die.” What was I to do? If I did not wear them, I was attaching more than I ought to such a trifle; perhaps the gift was a general one. Still I hesitated. Should I consult Anna, — but my not wearing it was, with Nanette, perfectly out of the question. It was just what my blue ceinture and dress wanted to finish them, and trying to think little about the matter, I descended to the drawing-room. Most of the guests had arrived, and they were not a few.

But they were all strange faces to me. I felt somewhat abashed when I looked round. But Lord St. Aubin came forward in an instant, and leading me up the room, introduced me to his aunt, Lary Mary Clairville. She kindly took my hand, and seated me beside herself. I thought I had never beheld anything half so beautiful in age before. She was verging on sixty. Her bright silver hair was cushioned after the olden fashion, beneath a high cap of equal date, from which hung lappets of the richest point ; the apron, handkerchief, and ruffles, of the same materials, and of equally delicate texture ; her gown of superb brocaded silk of silver gray, partially open in front and with a demi train, was plaited full as a hoop into a light taper back. Round her throat she wore a broad velvet, fastened by a brilliant diamond ornament. Black lace mittens were on her small white hands, in which she held a magnificent gold snuff-box, with a setting of brilliants encircling a picture on its top.

The features and face of Lady Mary were still a model. Time had done for them what it had for the date of her costume, had only passed over to give interest to each. Her eye of dark hazel, though sunken, was still expressive of kind benevolent feelings ; though sad, nothing of harsh peevishness was there. Her brow, though furrowed, was fair, and told of calmness and judgment. Her manner, though dignified, was bland, nay, winning. In her voice, too, was nothing of harshness ; soft and mild, it sounded full of cheerfulness.

“ I do not offer you any of the contents of my box ; but tell me, do you know a face that bears a resemblance to this miniature ?”

It was the likeness of a splendidly handsome man.

“ It is a flattering one, is it not, Lady Mary ?”

“ Which nephew do you think I allude to ?” said Lady Mary ; “ is it Clairville, think you ?”

I was bending over the box, and did not perceive his approach until I heard his voice.

“What say you of Clairville? He comes to answer for himself.”

I raised my eye in a moment; I saw he had marked the forget-me-not. And I met that sudden, bright flash which rendered Clairville so decidedly handsome. I felt all it implied. My cheek crimsoned as it passed across my mind. I was still holding the box when Lady Mary said—

“Now you can trace how strong the likeness is. Only look at Clairville.”

I could perceive a smile was on the old lady's countenance, as I regarded the picture, instead of seeking the resemblance in Clairville's face. For, indeed, dyed as I felt were my cheeks at this moment, I dared not raise my head to meet the looks of Clairville. But with that happy kindness so much his own, he put me at my ease. It was in one so lofty, so high minded, as Clairville, that this

descending to obviate and smooth the most trifling annoyance won the affections, as well as challenged our admiration for his more exalted endowments.

"See," said he, as he bent down to speak in an under voice; "see what a caricature shop we have brought you to?"

And, indeed, when I looked round, it was a motley group to be seen figuring amidst the splendours of such a princely dwelling. It might have given food to immortalize an Hogarth. It would have destroyed the sensitive Raffaele. The men pinioned tight as subjects for a mad asylum, in the then fashion of the day, incased in coats fitting like a Limerick glove, to shew formations however ill-shapen. Whether as fat as Daniel Lambert or as spare as the knight of La Mancha, whether with necks of cranes or with throats thick as the *warriors* of the Spanish bait, cased alike in yards of muslin clasping the poor sufferers' throats as tight as the bark round the

trunk of a tree ; and their motion was somewhat similar, for though the winds may stir its branches, yet the base remains stationary. The eyes certainly turned — the mouth, too, followed with a sort of side twist ; but as for the neck being brought round, the thing was not possible. They all sat on their chairs as if ready to make a bolt at the first stir, speaking in whisperings, or bursting forth with a desperate effort like a child's popgun. The robust mammas and gawkey daughters with pincushion waists, and such flowing petticoats, furbelowed like well-hooped barrels. Heads like Babel's tower, ascending to heaven, with not less of confusion. Flowers, feathers, and beads, piled amidst bows of Macassared hair. Then the titter, the giggle, and the drawing up, and eyeing, and settling, tucking the feet under their chairs, and fidgeting the hands and arms as if they were the most unnecessary part of the human frame.

“ Poor creatures,” said Lord Clairville ; “ how

very unhappy they look. I long to give a shout, as one would to a body of incarcerated school-boys, and tell them to go, and be free."

"Then why," said I smiling, "did you bid them come? To give freedom, we must ourselves be free, or else is it not the blind leading the blind?"

"I fear so," he replied; "for do we less often, like the angry ape, play fantastic tricks to gain our end than they do to obtain our notice? But indeed I have ever thought the electioneering system, of entertaining and trying to hoodwink to obtain voters, one very degrading to the noble independence of England; it is like infusing poison into a delicious draught. We talk of a man giving us his independent vote, but can we call that given in an independent spirit which we force from him, if not by bribing his pocket, at least by drugging his vanity; and when we have administered a sufficient dose, then act serjeant and recruit. It almost appears less honourable than buying

the thing outright. We injure the man morally; for on his weakness we found our strength. It is, besides, enclosing public right within the circumscribed fence of individual benefit; that which broad open principle ought alone to receive and possess, favour and power obtain and hold."

"You talk thus, and this your colour?" as I took up my blue ribbon.

"Yes; even to death, when it is so honoured."

"Come, come, I have no vote, no interest," I replied.

"Only the casting one, the pivot on which destiny holds her world," said Clairville.

I could perceive that no ear caught these words, save Lady Mary's, and I just saw, though almost imperceptibly, an exchange of glance between her and Clairville. But the next instant he went on,—

"Now do look what a brother St. Aubin is. Is he not the kindest, best of brother's, Miss Dorville."

“He is indeed,” I said.

“Look at him,” continued Clairville; “how he is talking, nay, flirting, with that elderly giantess in blue and yellow. See, she is giving a flower to St. Aubin. How he salaams the sultana. He has absolutely stuck the myrtle, like a Sunday village beau, in his button-hole. But her father is our stronghold. Doubtless, the fat, ruddy dame sees the *young* hope of the family’s brow encircled already with a coronet. She is an only child, daughter to our town-clerk and man of all work, with a purse as long as herself.”

“Come, dear Clairville, I will not allow you to be thus weighing out your constituents by avoirdupois weight, and measuring them by quarter inches. You are in for it now. Provided you obtain the majority, you must not be over nice, and you must say they are friends if they are willing to support you. And if it is not friendship, it is only a little harmless, self-loving vanity that gives their suffrages.”

“ England’s noblest privilege, aunt, is, then, the offspring of a little harmless vanity—a little self-loving,” replied Clairville.

“ I have lived far beyond half a century ; I never analysed an impulse even of my own heart, nor general, nor individual ones, that I did not find more dross than ore amongst them, yet, my young friend,”—and the dear old lady smiled so benevolently,—“ even in that I found food for vanity ; plenty of gilding to decorate my self-love. I put aside the dross, and in self-complacency treasured the ore for its scarcity ; so obtained from mercy a satisfaction which most probably severity would have flung back on myself. Always act, Clairville, as I know this pretty, fair one does. I can read it in that dimpled and laughing mouth. She treats the failings of her fellow-creatures as she does the weeds in her own garden, throwing them from her, and forgetting them ; but nourishing and cherishing all its flowers.”

At this moment Anna and Mrs. Elton were

presented to Lady Mary. Her keen glance seemed to give but one look, to be assured of the estimation they merited. Her manner was courteous; it was the courteousness of manner only; none of that complaisant, protecting blandness which, at the first, had been yielded towards myself.

The next day commenced with the hurly-burly of a strongly contested election. The town of M—— was all bustle and stir when we drove into it; the early flags and banners, music and mob, fun and frolic, abounded; all was novel to me, it being the first such scene of excitement I had ever witnessed. Little fear could arise for Clairville's success, for all was blue. Hats, bonnets, gowns, flags, windows, carriages, even the very air poured forth a volume of sound, in which blue, blue alone, was intelligible.

When I saw Clairville, handsome, elegant, and popular, mount the hustings, I did feel (pride forgive me) a joyousness in his distin-

guished and aristocratic bearing. Everything like the littleness of party spirit was banished from his address. He seemed armed alone as a champion for right and justice. Panoplied in honour and truth, he came forward to advocate all that was nationally beneficial, and to deprecate all that was morally injurious. Nothing reminded you that he stood forth more for the triumph of being honoured than honouring the cause he upheld. *Self* was neutralized as he went on, with eloquent address, touching on his opponent's principles; and as he challenged his listeners' attention to *these* principles and their results, there was *no* overwrought effort or wish to deepen their errors, while he protected his own opinions with masculine nerve and powerful strength. He spoke with all the towering independence of indubious aristocracy, while every word, look, and movement, gave a vouching stamp and character of the heritage whence he originated.

Though all felt that Clairville could be none

other than Tory in heart, yet not for a moment did that principle, as it was disclosed in him, bring with it aught of its selfish pride; aught of its aggrandizing monopoly; aught of its overweening grasping; aught of its hoodwinking and blinding; aught of extracting benefit from man's ignorance; of exalting, by debasing; robbing, to pay. He confounded not the impress of time and truth as synonymous; worshipping with bigot superstition the errors and influences of a long instituted legislature as a code of Medean and Persian force, regarding them as heirlooms, which neither circumstance nor expediency had privilege or right to abrogate or question; never considering the unmeasurableness and infinity of political contingencies and civilizing advancements; the extending increase of power from wealth and population; the influence of arts, knowledge, luxury, and cultivation; and the revolving changes wrought by foreign and domestic interests; and what, he would say, must be the

working and movements of such a mighty machine as this in its revolvings? Should it be circled within the narrow sphere of rules and customs of distant or limited periods? Must it not change or advance with progression? Should it circumscribe the advancement and improvement of man, as it were, within the prison walls, unscalable and impenetrable? No; Clairville, though a Tory, drew not his principles from prejudice, nor imbibed opinion from habit, accepting his political creed, as he did his name of baptismal denomination, under the pupilage of ignorance. No; unshackled by party, unbiassed by interest, he reasoned not as if the mighty whole of political action were part of himself; but he only a part of that mighty whole.

He looked upon his country as he would upon a chart, calculating all its resources, its capability, and its extent; regarding the past only as it could direct, instruct, and improve; the present and future, rather as a schoolmaster

than as an arbitrary judge, whose sway was unquestionable, and whose allegation was sentence. Yet he was a Tory ; one who would die to consecrate to royalty all the homage and glory of the most splendid throne of the known world. England and all its honours presented to him a galaxy unrivalled in the vast sphere of creation, — its nobility and aristocracy, a circlet never to be wrenched from its brow ; for it was a circlet like the precious jewelry which gems a crown's diadem, not borrowing its brilliancy from tinsel, but intrinsic worth ; from the regal diadem he would not rob one gem, nor from the noble's plume one feather.

Though he would hold tight the reins of power, it would not be to ride over every fence that protects and guards the just and social rights of man ; he would not mount the height to tread under foot the weak, the humble, and the deserving ; he would not build up a few overtopping pyramids for wonder and for fame ; he would not have the courts of kingly palaces

the temple for the children of Mammon, the dwelling for placemen ; he would not melt down the treasures of a people to make an image for the worshippers of bigotry and prejudice ; he would not enrich the flatterer and the time-server, while truth, honesty, industry, and talent, stood in outer courts, without hope of hearing or reward.

“ No,” said Clairville, as he stood a very model in form and expression for the inspiration of a statuary ; “ let liberality flow through our land like its own native streams, bearing on their swelling tides wealth, comfort, and communion ; as it courses on, let it be nourished and increased by industry and culture. Let our State, like the human frame, lend to each member its sinews of energy and strength, they looking, like *it*, to the heart and head for the directing and guiding principles. If any have wavered in upholding my cause, let not one word which I may have spoken this day be thought to have gone forth to influence them. I have spoken, not

to win, not to sue; not that I do not esteem them worthy of winning and suing; but I would have them above it, and would have them stand as unshackled by party, as proudly independent in power and principle, as I feel I now and ever shall stand. I make but one pledge, the pledge, I trust, of never dishonouring the cause I advocate; and the cause I advocate is, I trust, the benefit and welfare of my fellow-man."

He ceased. Around, above, below, sounded but one living voice; that voice but the utterance of one word; and that word, the name of Clairville. It was a moment of feverish, of breathless excitement. Did my heart waver? Perhaps it did. Though the halo of triumph circled the lofty brow of Clairville, yet I felt that his eye was seeking only mine, and I greeted his approach with a blushing cheek, a throbbing heart, and a rejoicing smile.

When the poll closed, Clairville was two hundred a-head—a glorious victory. The morrow was to be the final day, and Clairville was then

to be chaired. During this period of excitement, not a word of explanation had passed, of course, between Clairville and myself. But it could not continue thus. When I questioned myself, it was a fearful thing.

On the morning of the final day, after a hurried breakfast, I happened to return to the room. All but Clairville had left it. It was a small one, looking on a flower-garden, with windows opening on the grass lawn. I found what I had returned for, and was retiring. Clairville was sealing a letter; he rose from his seat and approached me.

“ Will you stay one moment, Agnes? I have had so much triumph lately that it has made me presumptuous, I fear, for I shall not be satisfied unless you pay me a compliment.”

“ I thought you never sued to win ?”

“ Yes, Agnes, *I do* ; every rule has an exception ; may I not make one ?”

“ Is the temptation very great ?”

“ You cannot doubt it is. Do you remember

the pretty compliment my aunt paid you the first day she ever saw you? Will you give me the reality of some of those pretty flowers she said you knew so well how to prize? Will you gather a nosegay to-day for my triumph?"

"Indeed I ought, if it was only to bid it thank you for this *lovely gift*," as I looked at the forget-me-nots.

"Thank me, Agnes! I could worship those dear little flowers for what they have told me. Have they told me *too* much, think you?"

I was standing at the window. My hand was resting on the casement; he looked and pressed it for a moment to his heart. His voice was full of emotion; his countenance beaming with fondness.

"Agnes, you do not answer me; you do not look at me."

"I do not, indeed, for I cannot; but what would I give, Clairville, could you see my heart."

"And have I not seen it, Agnes?"

I felt, indeed, he had not ; but I could say no more, for some one entered, and, hastily withdrawing my hand, I said, “ I will gather your flowers.”

Something of reproach followed my steps as I walked through the garden and conservatory ; yet I culled the brightest and loveliest flowers, and having carefully arranged them, was returning, when I met St. Aubin.

“ This beautiful nosegay is for Clairville’s triumph, dear Miss Dorville. How kind. Do let me have the pleasure of shewing them first, and telling him you plucked them.”

“ With pleasure,” I replied.

“ But do you know Mrs. Elton has just been telling me she must go in two days ? Don’t, don’t let her ; we shall all be so wretched if you do. Say you will ask her. Would that the stay were *for ever*.”

“ For ever, Lord St. Aubin !” I replied, laughing ; “ that is no time ; but time is quite defined with us ; only half an hour for my toilette ;

adieu." And I ran away, but it was not with that light step and heart as was my wont. Lord St. Aubin's perfect blindness with regard to Clairville's preference appeared strange to me, especially so, since the feelings he regarded me with himself should, I thought, have made him more alive to them in his brother. Strange, too, that Clairville had not disclosed them to him.

"Perhaps after all it is a mere fancy," I said, as I looked in the glass and arranged my bonnet. "I hope it is." But in an instant I saw the conscious blush rise on my cheek. No; I felt he loved me beyond the power of words to tell me, though his actions and looks might. Clairville was no midway being; he must madly love, or love not at all; and e'en, perhaps, his hate could be as deep.

But there was no time for further thought—the carriages were at the door. The whole cavalcade, as it occupied the front of St. Aubin Hall, was a gay, gallant sight—a bright, showy pageant—with Heaven smiling down, without

a cloud, clear and azure, as the floating banners that waved in its sunny breeze. Summer's own sweet hues on every bush and flower, tree and lawn; the lake gladening in morning beams; all seemed to say, "rejoice." The carriages, grooms, and attendants, were all decorated with blue bows and nosegays of flowers. The horses, too, as if conscious of their master's triumph, pawed, champed their bits, and arched their stately necks. Their glossy coats dazzled with gay accoutrements as they tossed their heads erect; and then they started with lightning swiftness down the deep overbowering avenue, carriage after carriage; horsemen all in gallant trim, with flags flying, bugle and horn sounding, in the rear. It made you breathless as they came speeding on, without pause or delay.

There must be something intoxicatingly gratifying to an Englishman's heart when he feels himself holding the station Clairville now filled; the representative of those whom, from infancy

to childhood, from childhood to manhood, he had dwelled amongst; entrusted with their most sacred rights, and enthroned within their best affections, looked to as the guiding star in all their difficulties,—their prop in all their weakness,—the redresser of all their wrongs,—the promoter of all their benefits,—the mediator through whom their wishes ascend to the throne of their kings, — the voice which demands from a nation the charter of liberty, independence, and right. And in Clairville was to be found all the consciousness of this high and glorious responsibility; all the capabilities and strength to wield their mightiness; with judgment to direct, power to support, and firmness to maintain. It was a moment of stirring enthusiasm, as on entering the town of M——, thronging multitudes came joyfully hailing his approach. Bells pealing from every church's pinnacle the exhilarating tidings; bands of music, shout and welcoming; all was light and laughing.

The moment came, and Clairville was to ascend his car of triumph. It was classically beautiful—of Grecian lightness. Above was raised a canopy of blue velvet, hung with a deep silver fringe; in front was a recumbent lion; on the back, an anchor, both of embossed silver; the one symbolical that nobleness and strength should ever support their forward progress,—the latter, that hope should ever follow the steps of their leader; the whole drawn by six gray horses of great beauty, caparisoned and decorated with the party colour. At the head of each proud animal walked a groom, with jacket and cap of blue and silver. The interior of the car was also lined with blue velvet, and ornamented with blue and silver forget-me-nots.

Could I but confess the language they spoke when I turned my eye from them to the still more lovely one I held in my hand? And was I vain enough to prize it and wear it? Yes, and perhaps at no moment of existence had I ever more pride, more exultation, in being the

loved one, as when I first caught a glimpse of Clairville from the windows as he passed.

Lord St. Aubin, with all a brother's affectionate fervour, exclaimed, as Clairville, looking up, pressed his hand on his heart and bowed, "Does he not look a splendid fellow?"

He did indeed carry a splendid bearing. Few, very few, could not but feel and own how powerfully attractive. He stood in all the vigour of youth, in all the finish of manhood, realizing into life all the beau ideal of a Roman senator; yet, with the grace, elegance, and polish of modern courtesy, he shone alike the hero of classic story and presented the proud character of one of England's statesmen, with head uncovered; its fine outline chiselled to symmetry—the eye, a volume. It was when Clairville smiled you felt his worth. That smile came from the heart; and that heart was warm as it was true, and as true as it was kind.

On he passed, amidst shout and acclamation,

music and adulation. Every window crowded, waving long and loud congratulation. Banners floated in hues bright as the skies above, that presented a dome without cloud or spot. The thronging crowds pressed on like rolling waters, their distant murmurs borne on the air like the roar of its mighty sound.

The cavalcade had reached its destination, when what was at first looked upon as an object of mirth, and the source of peals of laughter, proved a sad finishing to a day of such high-wrought satisfaction.

From a small casement opposite the town-hall, from whence Clairville was again to address his constituents, were to be seen exhibited a large drum, brass cymbals, and red flags, all decorated with the like colour, being that of the rival candidate. Above was seen the head of Red Oliver, as he was denominated by his townsmen ; a sort of wild demagogue, the ring-leader of every riot, with just enough education to obtain a smattering of the technicality of poli-

tical cant sufficient to puzzle the ignorant, and to confuse his own scattered brains. In his commercial as well as political speculations, Red Oliver had alike failed, and he was now dependent on his wits. He might have been a king amongst the culottes of revolutionary France; but he looked a very fiend as he now presented himself amongst the orderly and well-regulated population of the town of M——.

All at first looked on this being as a maniac ; his head ever and anon emerged from the window grinning with venom—furious as an angry bull-dog. He beat the drum, then clashed the cymbals, shouting through a vacancy in the window just sufficient to disclose his face, which had all the impress of violence, age, and vice, written on it in deep lines. The past seemed to have worked its worst, the cheek sunken, and the eye haggard, while his head was adorned with a red nightcap, and his throat encircled with a handkerchief of the same colour.

The contrast at first, certainly, only presented the ludicrous, as he screeched again and again, "Red, red ! Down to hell with your taxes ! Go pay the Devil his dues, you paunched beggars, you sellers of human flesh, you cannibal traffickers ! —Down, down, I say, with slavery,—reform ! reform !"

"Shut your windows, muffle your drum, Red Oliver, that's a good man," answered the mob at first, but Oliver was deaf to reason. His drum sounded still louder, his cymbals crashed and crashed again.

"Red, red !" roared the maniac.

Irritation began, at last, to shew itself. It was but a glimmering spark at first. Now hats were thrown up, but the big drum breasted it all. At last sticks, stones, everything within reach, was levelled against his sounds of discord. Drum, cymbals, and flags, offered no longer protection to the head and casement of Red Oliver, while some few of the red party who were amidst the crowd commenced a defence in favour of their champion. In a

moment the infuriated mob swept on like an ocean under a sirocco blast. Women rushed amidst the tempest to defend husband or child; caps were torn off; prostrated victims, kicked and bleeding, rose up still more besmeared to renew the combat, or were dragged fainting from the fearful scene, and a deep, unbroken roar rent the air. Still the hero of this battle relaxed not his voice; above still echoed, still vociferated, "Down with them, down with them; red, red, red for ever!"

Up and out would dart the hideous creature's head like a jack in a box, almost masked with mud and blood, so defaced that it scarcely looked human. The frame work of his window was all that was now left, but down body and all would go, then up again grinning, "Red, red!" Finally, the whole bore a frightful character of lawless fury. Neither threats nor entreaties could restore order, while the fiend-like spectre from the window, like the angel of destruction, kept up his cry. At last the mob

made a rush at the door of the house, which was in a another street; it seemed to shake in their hands, as if an earthquake's touch was there. Cries of murder, murder, echoed from the windows across the street, and Red Oliver was no longer to be seen.

Lord St. Aubin now, regardless of himself, rushed out to endeavour to still the uproar. I felt pale and sick when I beheld him pushing through the dense and affrighting mob beneath. It was awful to look down upon it, resembling the denizens of a maniac world. A few seconds of intense watching, and we heard a hundred voices cry, "Strangle, strangle, the old ruffian! Villains, villains, you have killed Lord St. Aubin!" And the next instant beheld Clairville dart like an arrow across the street. I screamed; I felt bewildered; and I know not what impelled me, but I tore my hand from the restraining grasp of all who attempted to stop me, and without a thought of the appearance or consequence, flew down stairs.

I stopped,—held the arm of some one for a second, for I felt dizzy with terror; but the next, my senses were recalled. I beheld Clairville bearing in the apparently lifeless body of his brother. No one appeared to know what to do, but I felt sobered, as it were, by the sudden shock.

“He is not dead,” I remember I said; “Clairville, he is not dead!” and I lifted my streaming eyes, and I felt that an agonizing smile was on my face. Clairville’s countenance was as livid as his brother’s. Intense agony was in it.

“His pulse beats. Is there no medical advice?” I said, as all stood motionless.

“True, true,” repeated Clairville, as he laid his brother on the sofa, and knelt in silence by his side. I knelt too, and bathed his temples. St. Aubin opened his eyes, and then closed them, but I saw he knew me.

“Fear, fear not, Clairville; he lives, — he knows us,” I whispered.

Never, never shall I forget him at that moment; the big drops rolling down his cheeks; his livid paleness; his quivering lips.

The surgeon arrived, and we left him with Lord Clairville and Lady Mary. It was not long before Lady Mary came to relieve our worst fears. She said, every hope was entertained that the injury would prove nothing like so dangerous as was first apprehended, and that it entirely originated in accident. Lord St. Aubin, in forcing his way up the narrow stairs of Oliver's house, was unfortunately met by the descending mob, and that some person, having received a violent push, fell on his Lordship, which immediately knocked him senseless against the wall, and occasioned, the surgeon feared, a rupture of some of the smaller blood-vessels. Lady Mary said he had spoken, but it was only to entreat Miss Agnes Dorville to allow him to beg for her presence once again.

“He is now quiet on the sofa, and must not be moved for several hours, nor be in the slightest

degree agitated—so perhaps you will grant his request. Shall I tell him so?” I looked to Mrs. Elton.

“Certainly, my dear, if Lady Mary wishes it.”

“Well, I will go and tell him you will come and sit with him.”

Lord Clairville now entered with a brightened countenance. He repeated what Lady Mary had just informed us of respecting the accident; an accident, indeed, we all agreed it must have been, for one impulse and one feeling seemed to have actuated all.

The rest of the party were watching the still crowded streets, while Clairville, weary and exhausted, took a seat by me on the sofa; he threw back his head, closed his eyes, and pressed his brow, as if to recover himself; and that brow seemed aching with intense and agitating thoughts. Yet never had I seen him look handsomer, as he brushed his disordered hair from off his forehead, and leant in silence for a few moments, seemingly lost to everything

around him. He turned to me and said, in his deep, low voice, at all times so full of expression, " And what is it worth after all, Agnes ? I am weary, weary of it."

" Say not so, Clairville ; it is only over-excitement. You will not always feel thus."

" Not feel thus, Agnes ! I know not what I feel ; I am blessed one moment with such blessedness. It is sweet to close my eyes and think of it over and over again. Even this moment I would not sell for a diadem ; but yet what a being of self-worship does the consciousness of this deliciousness make me ! Agnes, had you witnessed what I have, and heard me say, I was blessed, perhaps you would hate me." He fixed a steadfast, inquiring eye on me. " Poor St. Aubin ; but from the first was I wrong ? I knew it was vain, it was hopeless."

" Need I answer ?" I replied. " And can I rejoice at it. Strange, incomprehensible contradiction is man's mind,—extracting sweets from poison, and poison from sweets."

“ I love my brother, I think, as warmly, as sincerely, as brother can love brother. Yet, strange, I rejoice at that which is bitterness to him.”

He spoke hurriedly and agitatedly as he went on:—“ But indeed, Agnes, I dreamt not that it was an affection of the deep, deep root I see it is. Poor St. Aubin! it is part of his very being; and when he deemed he was taking a last farewell of that being, futurity became darkened, deepened, beneath its shadow—for it was to separate him from you, Agnes.”

He paused from emotion. “ Yes,” again Clairville continued, “ he thought he was dying; your name alone was on his lips—your image alone passed between earth and heaven.—Agnes, even I ask you to be all that is kind to St. Aubin.” With a strong effort Clairville tried to overcome himself, and then said, “ Will you come with me to see him now? He wishes Mrs. Elton to return to St. Aubin, and

for me to go back with the party. Lady Mary will remain with him here at the inn."

Lady Mary now entered to make this request; and I said to Mrs. Elton, "Shall I ask to be allowed to remain with Lady Mary to-night? I think I can be of service to her."

"Lady Mary," said Mrs. Elton, "will you accept Agnes' company to-night?"

"Does she offer it herself?"

"Indeed I do, dear Lady Mary."

"Then stay, my child." And Lady Mary, Clairville, and myself, left the room for St. Aubin's.

He was reclining on the sofa, pale as death. He extended his hand to me, and was about to speak; but I said, "Not a word, or I am gone." He smiled faintly, and was silent. I sat beside him till he closed his eyes, and found relief in forgetfulness, for he still seemed to suffer much pain.

I now went over to the window; Clairville was leaning against it, absorbed in reflection. When I approached, he seemed to start as from

a dream. We were both silent for some time ; at last, leaning on the back of a chair, he bent forward ; his voice was scarce above a whisper, fearful of disturbing St. Aubin.

“ Agnes, you are tired ? ”

“ No, indeed, I am not.”

But he only smiled, and shook his head incredulously ; and we relapsed into silence again.

It was all still, very still, to ears and hearts which had been broken in on by such sounds and feelings as ours of to-day. But I ween if the murmur of sound was hushed, whether it did not make the hearts beat with more vivid pulse ; for who could have looked on Clairville, and not have read how deeply and how fondly he was dreaming of her who was by his side. I did not bid him go, for I must—in all my weakness—confess I felt happy. What atreacherous thing is woman’s heart ! How often will she break the mirror, only to behold her own image reflected in its fragments !

If I was deceiving Clairville, I was equally

deceiving myself. He had taken my "forget-me-not" from me, and was apparently deeply occupied in arranging the crushed leaves. Not a word had been spoken for some time by either party, for Lady Mary, with her back towards us, was seated by the sofa, and was most probably dozing.

"That will do, Clairville, thank you ; Nanette will finish what you have left undone."

"You don't want them ; they have seen their little day of pride, and it is passed. What shall I do with them ?"

I held my hand out for them. "They speak for themselves, do they not ?"

"Have they spoken ?"

I did not answer. Clairville's eye was fondly fixed on my downcast countenance.

"You won't neglect them then ? Do you grant them immortality ?"

"They are mine now," I said ; "but I won't tell you what I will do with them, or what I will grant them."

“Nor let me think what I wish?”

“Nonsense! You must go,—indeed you must. See the time!” as I held my watch.

“Time! what is time? such moments are eternity. Must I go? Shall I take with me them or their remembrance—which?”

“Take *them*,” said I, smiling.

“No, Agnes, you do not mean that?”

“Yes, indeed; you see I will not accept them back;” and I withdrew the hand I had before held out to receive them. A shade passed over the before radiant face of Clairville.

“Not if I ask you, and begone?”

“What! bribe me to accept them back? I thought you never bribed.”

“Well, you will take them, and I will punish you by staying?”

“No, no! give them.”

“Not if I must go.”

“Yes, indeed you must go. Give them to me.”

“Must I?”

And I took them from him. Kindly pressing my hand, he said, “ Farewell, then, sweet Agnes ; these last brief moments have been the dearest of this eventful day.”

Evening closed in, and Lady Mary and myself were left alone. It was delightful to converse with her, for, with all the past to reflect upon, she possessed all the fervour and warmth of almost youthful feelings: while talking of circumstances and persons of more than half a century back, they all came forward fresh, untouched by the mossy impress of the past ; in her hands, the things of to-day wore all the polish and charm of glowing life,—nothing of prolixity, nothing of severity, in her conversation and remarks. When she spoke of Clairville, it was with the enthusiasm and partiality of the fondest mother, or the most darling sister. With delight she dwelt upon all the fine, bold darings of his school-boy days—of his more advanced talents—his unselfish heart—like the glad sun, brightly falling on all around it. I

thought, too, as she spoke, her deep eye was fixed on me, which one feels so much more when it glances from one that so questions but seldom. She left me for some time, and I was thrown on myself. I still sat at the window, watching the few stragglers that remained in the streets.

What a contrast from the morning's scene. Scarcely a sound disturbed the quietness of evening. The bells tolled their hours; the coaches came rolling in; the quick bustle of changing horses and noisy passengers was heard for a moment; then all was stillness again.

There is something sadly monotonous in the loneliness of a town. You feel you are in the midst of busy life, yet look within as if you bore no part with it. Sympathy slumbers on its curtained couch, and receives no light to call it into waking, without which existence is not. linking that chain which draws heart to heart, and thought to thought. Now do we stand unconscious of all within us. It is the

powers of others playing on our minds and souls that brings forth their music.

Genius is to the mind what sympathy is to the human heart. Sympathy ! parent of all its best and loveliest impulses—genius ! the creator of all its mental power. But even genius, unsympathized with, will but prove an idle inventor, nor induce the labour of perfection. If it has to trace a path unsought and unseen, like Sisyphus of old, we roll life heavily along, and then as heavily fall back on ourselves again.

The lamps were lighted, and I withdrew from the window to throw myself wearily upon the sofa, but not to sleep, for busy thoughts came, and with them questioning and doubt. I thought of Mrs. Stewart, of Clarence, and then of Clairville. What was I acting upon ? Was it that my young heart, volatile, vain, and selfish, was yielding itself to new impressions ? Was Clarence, the treasured thought almost from infancy, rivalled by one of a few months' intimacy ? I trembled to look at what I had already

done ; yet when I beheld Clairville, I seemed spell bound. Like a talismanic charm, his voice breathed but to call forth an answering echo of undefined and sweet feeling. I did not think I loved Clairville as I had ever loved Clarence, not even as I then loved him. Yet it was torture to me to pain Clairville—it was pride to me to be loved by such a being. And for the first time in life, I dared not think, I dared not look into my own breast, and trace the images that dwelt there. Like the scared child in the midst of darkness, I shut my eyes, fearful to gaze steadfastly upon that which in after life I had but too fatally to prove was but the shadowy creation of idle fantasy. Madly, blindly, I passed on,—turned not back till it was too late to find out a remedy. “Do I regret it ?” asked I again, as I leaned my head on the arm of the sofa, and wept. “And is it now too late? Would I draw back at this present moment? Could I bear to be told Clairville loved me no longer? No, no ! I could not,—I

must, I *do* love him." But still I wept, and Lady Mary found me in tears when she entered ; but I attributed them to exertion and fatigue, and we soon after separated.

St. Aubin was pronounced out of danger, and we returned again to St. Aubin Hall ; but of course all its festivities were for the present postponed. Of Clairville we saw little, though every moment that could be spared from the many calls now on him were given to us. Towards myself he was all that affection could be ; still, in the presence of Mrs. Elton and his brother, there was not only an evident restraint, but a concealment. Before Lady Mary, nothing of the sort was visible. Had Clairville ever spoken in direct terms, had his avowal of affection ever been a perfect declaration, I perhaps should never have been won as I had been, never have wavered or doubted the possibility of a change of affection ; but while he wooed he seemed to ask so little that I scarcely felt I was giving aught. Yet reflection would

speaking, truth would tell me, that the outpouring of such an attachment was not the idle gift that is bestowed and then forgotten,—not the toy to be played with and cast away. As the fire nature kindles within earth's recesses burns not less vividly because not seen. With some it might smoulder till it destroyed what it preyed upon; but, no! though now hid, could I acknowledge it did not exist? If checked, it would only burst forth to desolate. I trembled to dwell on what Clairville would be if I bid him love no more; yet if I had ever bid him do so, it had rather been *stolen* from than bestowed by me.

Anna Dorville, fortunately for me, had left St. Aubin, the day after the accident, to fulfil an engagement in W——. Mrs. Elton and myself were still to remain, even after the departure of Clairville, who was obliged to go to London to take his seat. I, perhaps, ought to have told Mrs. Elton how I was circumstanced; but still I thought what had as yet fallen from Lord Clairville scarcely warranted

my doing so. Mrs. Elton, on her part, appeared rather to avoid than allude to anything relative to either Lord St. Aubin or Clairville. I knew she had some motive for her silence; but what it was, I could not define.

Lord Clairville left St. Aubin. I saw him for a short time alone, before he went; for after breakfast, when he was wishing the party good bye, I was standing at one of the windows, when, passing into the flower garden, he said, "Do, Miss Dorville, just look here." I went out, and he continued, "Let me, for Heaven's sake, bid you farewell somewhere but in the presence of Mrs. Elton. I cannot bear that woman's eyes when I am speaking to you. I shall not be gone for this next hour: say I shall see you in my aunt's sitting room' "

"Nonsense—farewell!" And I was walking away, but I saw the pain I was inflicting, and came back.

"I knew you would!" and he again smiled joyfully.

"You knew I would? For saying so I am

almost determined not to give you this heart's-ease, and bid you deliver the same into safe keeping, within the space of half an hour."

"Within half an hour? Now it is doubly mine!" as he caught it from my hand. "I believe you are a naughty little flirt after all, as Anna Dorville calls you; but *au revoir*; I must go and counter-order the carriage till one—two o'clock shall I say?"

"No! The flower will be dead long before that." And I returned into the breakfast-room, and telling Lady Mary I was going to finish a little drawing I was about for her, I retired to her private sitting-room. Clairville's half hour was not ten minutes.

"Here's your heart's-ease, Agnes. Now I shall not go till it is quite dead, for I cannot carry it away with me."

"But you will leave it behind with your friends? It won't die with them, be assured."

"No, no! I won't think that, or I should not be going, you know. It was you bid me enter

into all this business of life. You doubt it not—you know it,” said he, with passionate vehemence,—“tell me so, that I may go pursue it with heart and soul.”

“Indeed, indeed, Clairville, I do not doubt your love.”

“No, you could not do that; but I do not ask for all yours. Yet fondly as I feel I have a right to hope for it, I will, I must deserve it first by shewing Agnes I exist, I live, but at her bidding. We have heard of those to whom nature in early existence had denied the power of speech, who, by a strong, sudden, awakening excitement, suddenly become loosened from this bodily thralldom: so was it when you bid me, at Mrs. Dorville’s, enter into active life,—your voice sounded like a call to a new and before unthought-of capability and energy. I seemed at once to taste the consciousness of man’s high destination, even in this life, and all the finer endowments and impulses of his nature. But, Agnes, had I not seen your love, like a

glorious irradiating beam, lightening the toil, the darkness, and shadows, of my onward path, I could not have had strength to have unbarred the portals which long-dormant apathy had allowed to remain so long closed. But hope, hope, that sweet smiling child, which promises, as it points onward, all that is dear and valuable, all that is beautiful and lovely, bid me go forth. Yes, Agnes, do I say too much, when I say hope did all this? Do not turn from me!"—as I bent over a vase of flowers, near which we were standing. Was it done altogether to hide the deep blush that such a tale as this, spoken with Clairville's fond impressive voice, look, and manner, had called forth? or was it to conceal an undefined, glimmering feeling of this sad deceptive heart? Perhaps it was.

"Agnes, you do not bid me hope—yet has something dearer than words told me so, by letting me love on, thus fondly, from the first evening I beheld you at Mrs. Dorville's. Do you remember?"

“ Yes, Clairville, I do.”

“ Strange, inconceivable power ! I saw you stand talking to my brother, with that sweet, sweet joyous smile, and those bright, bright innocent eyes ! No, Agnes love, you must not leave me,” and his arm encircled my waist. “ Let me tell you, may I not ? how from that instant I felt that nothing in this world, no, not even death, could erase the impression. It seemed as if my own had ceased, and you, you only, were my existence.”

“ Hush, dear Clairville !”

“ No, Agnes, let me talk on. I hear the carriage wheels,—let me talk to drown their sound, for they are to bear me from you. Let me talk on, and tell you the madness of my joy on the morrow, when I again met you.”

“ On the morrow, Clairville ? You talk wildly !”

“ Because I then felt wildly. To be near you, to hear you speak, to look on you, was intoxication. To your gentle ears, perhaps, sweet

Agnes, this may sound like delirium. When, too, your young mind opened to me—when that mind, hour after hour, seemed to confide in me, and to think I could understand it when none others did—I trembled to wake from such a dear, delicious dream; yet was it agony to conceal all I felt! Did I think wrongly? Did you not confide in me? Did I not understand you?”

“Yes, Clairville, you did. *That* is all true.”

“Quite true, Agnes?”

“Yes, quite true.”

And Clairville drew a quicker breath, was silent a moment, and then continued—“Do you remember the day Rollo behaved so ill? It rises up before me, ever like a horrible spectre. I will shut my eyes upon it.”

He paused again. I guessed not what he was about to say, and I looked up as I said, “Go on, Clairville, or your *horrible spectre* will frighten me away.”

“Yes, that smile indeed bids me go on fear-

lessly : you left the room, and Anna Dorville turned to her mother, and said, ‘ How silly of aunt Elton to imagine she will ever get Agnes to give up Clarence Stewart ! She not only idolizes him, but everything belonging to him.’ ” These words were a very thunderbolt. Again he paused, “ But no, no ! she spoke not truth, Agnes, or I *could* not, *should* not be *here*, dearest, to *tell* you. *Should* I ? ” Heavens ! shall I ever forget the rushing, tiding emotions of that moment ? Speak I could not. “ Agnes, Agnes, you tremble !—speak ! The thing is impossible.” There was something strange in Clairville’s voice as he uttered this. He did not, surely, laugh as he spoke ?—but in a calmer tone he continued, “ I could not be deceived that evening, too, at Mrs. Dorville’s. Do I not remember that pallid cheek, that trembling arm, as it rested on my own ?—that voice, too, though breathing but as a whisper, how it vibrated on every chord of this devoted heart ? you must love me ! Tell me so, if only for an instant ! ”

But I had burst into tears. A moment he pressed me to his heart.

“Forgive, forgive my doubt! *Suspect* Agnes Dorville! Doubt, doubt *you*, and thus be blessed—*impossible!*”

“True, true Clairville!” I said, but I started at the sound of my own wild accents.

“And must I leave you? but shall we not soon, very soon, meet as *thus* we part?”

“Yes, we *must*, Clairville!”

“Say we shall; and may I not take this little pledge?” as he took my almost passive hand, and drew from it a ring. “Say we shall.”

“Have I not, Clairville?”

“You have, dearest, and I will never doubt again.”

“Never, Clairville?”

“No, never!”

And long after I had lost all sound of the carriage wheels that bore him from St. Aubin, I started to find that I was still standing beside the vase of flowers. The first thing that roused me was the servant, who handed me two letters,

one from Mrs. Stewart, which I tremblingly tore open. It was kind, affectionate,—but it bore not the stamp of Mrs. Stewart's cheerfulness. It was throughout decidedly written in sadness of spirits. I started, too, when I read her allusions to the new ties I was about to form. Now she spoke of their responsibility, the high destination I had to fill,—and then (the paper looked as if it had been blotted with tears), she spoke of the prayers they would all—*all* (and there was a dash under *all*) offer up for my happiness, for my welfare, for my guidance, that only true guidance which is from that lofty dwelling, far exalted above all dwellings, which the prince and the subject ought alike to seek and forsake not.

She spoke little of her family; of Clarence not once. At the end, she said, “ I hope your uneasiness is all past. It must have been a sad trial for you; and I trust for your sake Lord St. Aubin does not continue a sufferer from the accident.”

“ Lord St. Aubin !” I repeated to myself,

“surely it is not to Lord St. Aubin she alludes throughout? impossible! I will write and tell her it is not true. Not true! what not true? But I will write and tell her all—tell her of all the struggles of this idle heart.” The thought seemed to bring comfort—“She will advise.”

I took up the other letter. I looked at it again and again. For a moment I thought it was from Clarence; but no, it had been now a long space since he had written. And latterly, when Clairville was beside me, I often thought, “Well, Clarence does not love me as Clairville loves.”

I have said I will not dwell on the recollection of those young days; but when I read Anna Dorville’s letter (for it was from her), I felt a choking suffocation as I did so. It told of nothing but pleasure. My heart was sick as I went on. She wrote, “When I look at Clarence Stewart, hear him speak daily as we now meet him, he appears to me to be sent to this naughty world to evidence the possibility that

Adam might have been the faultless being we read of, breathing perfection in the sweet hour of primeval existence. The blight of our nature seems never to have fallen upon Stewart; his soul wears a charmed life. Perhaps," she said, "I will venture further. You know I am ever a privileged speaker. My words were ever counted as dead, dried, and good for nothing, as autumn leaves, and therefore allowed to be scattered here and there just as the wind of the moment might strew them. So I may write any nonsense; and I wonder, as no doubt we have all wondered, why Eve should have felt the slightest wish to be informed of aught beside the delightful existence she possessed. (But we women are sad gossips, from nature, you see.) And I wonder quite as much that any heart which had found a dwelling-place in the affections of Clarence Stewart could seek another mortal home to repose in, though the palace gates of lordly pride might open to bid it welcome."

True, true ! and sorrow came with the thought. “ Perhaps he loves Anna as he once did me.” But, no ! I smiled at that thought, but it was in bitterness. “ No, no ! he never was attached to me ; no, never to me ; three, four letters have I written, and he has never answered one. And now he is gay and happy, though he hears I am about to be united to another.”

Tears came down, and doubts, too, crowded on. From that moment pride dried those tears which before had flowed so fast. Like a lightning stroke which, though it flash on the dripping soil, however moistened, scorches as it falls, and leaves the spot it touches lifeless and darkened. I could no more. My cheek was burning, my heart was beating high. On the morrow, calmer thoughts arose. I wrote to Clarence ; told him all ; opened the deep and stirring recesses of my whole soul. Two days brought the answer : in solitude I opened it ; I read it ; yes, with a steady eye ; not a drop fell from that eye. With a cold hand I re-folded it. I remember well the quiet, mechanical

movements of all I did. I placed it in my desk. I felt my lips were compressed; I knew my cheek was pale; that my bosom throbbed as I read these few lines:—

“ Dear Agnes,

“ Think not of our days of folly. I am rejoiced to hear of your happy prospects; one more fitted to adorn them cannot be. Doubtless I shall see wonders when we meet, which I dare say will not be long after your marriage, as I shall be coming up to town about that period. Do not think it unkind, my not writing a longer letter; but we are all so gay and so busy I have not a moment I can call my own. I have said nothing to my mother respecting your letter, as it might make her unhappy. Perhaps you had better not allude to it or any of its contents. With a thousand loves and congratulations from all at Copsewood,

“ Ever your sincerest friend,

“ CLARANCE STEWART.”

I had read the letter ; I had placed it within my desk, and then walked to draw my tightened breath at the window. More I remember not, till I saw Mrs. Elton and dear Lady Mary leaning over me as I lay on a sofa in my own room. In vain did they question me as to the cause of my fainting. “ Nanette had found me cold and almost lifeless.”

“ If she did,” I replied, “ I am *quite, quite* well now. Dear Mrs. Elton, dear Lady Mary,” and I arose, went over to the glass, and looking at myself, laughingly exclaimed, “ What an object ! Nanette, in mercy to the glass settle me, or I shall break it !”

Pride, pride, that false cheat, as it were on eagle’s wings, bore me above all this ; yes, to a height which, when I looked down from it, falsely diminished every object and feeling ; busy sorrow appeared but little, and that I *would* crush beneath my foot. Was the reality so absolutely lessened in itself ? That time alone could prove.

In a few days after, we quitted St. Aubin; but previous to our doing so, Lady Mary said to me—

“ Miss Dorville, I have a few words for your private ear. Agnes Dorville,” said Lady Mary, “ I know is above affectation. She will not tell an old woman that she is too short-sighted to see how matters stand with regard to the subject she is about to enter on, which is, that both my nephews are equally alive to the fascinations of one of the loveliest of my young friends. That you are beautiful your looking-glass must have told you ever; but in telling you so, it has not marred that which I prize far beyond beauty, for the mind seems to have drawn its character from that which the looking-glass reflected, giving us a copy of its perfection. Don’t, don’t blush. At one glimpse I saw how the young heart of Clairville was impressed. I was not so much alive to St. Aubin’s impressions; for in him impressions, though made on an excellent surface, are the passing shadows of a summer

day, gleaming where they fall ; but it is a summer day of light clouds,—they come, rest a moment, and are gone. Clairville from the first hour he was cradled in these arms was an idol. When I thought of him, when I looked upon him, I said, the trunk is decayed, blighted ; but yet there is greenness in the branches, and I rejoiced beneath their freshness. He, Agnes Dorville, is not like his brother ; an image once traced on his breast is traced for ever. Chiselled there, it can never be effaced ; to efface would be to crush that on which it is modelled.”

I trembled ; I felt my colour leave my cheek, as Lady Mary went on in her deep, soft, impressive voice, so like her nephew’s.

“ Agnes, upwards of sixty summers have come and gone, and Mary Clairville has been one of the busy, acting beings of this cold, selfish, but yet beautiful creation. The beautiful is from on high—immortal ; the coldness—the selfishness—from the serpent-track of earthly degradation. Its circumstances, its people, have come and gone

as the springs, the autumns, and the summers, yet amid all the remembrance of first affection has never known a winter. What then is its blighting?—the Upas' poison? I know the world;—that world which characterizes so much, yet whose character is so little, so trifling, so decked with gaudy trinkets, which treats as a fable the existence of such feelings as I now look back on. But why?—improbability dwells not in their non-existence, but in callousness of hearts, — hearts not of flesh, but ones which are petrified in the cased atmosphere of wordly coldness, which wisely, indeed, put a veil over that which they can never have capability to image, and laugh at that which looks to their filmy sight a mask, a real Quixote of chivalry. Such is not the first affection of such a man as Clairville. Agnes Dorville! beware! beware! Pluck not the golden fruit if you would not treasure it. Pluck it not, to crush it, and then leave it but dust and ashes. You know, as I know, Clairville's first affections are

yours, and therefore, burning on such a shrine, are lighted by a torch of immortality."

I trembled as I listened; yet, I thought, if true, how unlike those of Clarence Stewart. Lady Mary paused; her eye was fixed on me.

"You know it, Agnes. Will you not confess it?"

"I do, indeed, dear Lady Mary."

"We may smile in youth when we prattle of love, of affection; it is when we have sailed along life's tide, and see what love and affection bring with them, that we then experience their weight in the scale of human happiness or misery. In woman's scale they are the balance on which her earthly, her eternal welfare hangs. The creature of dependence, she must necessarily be the creature of suffering, and that suffering can only be regulated by the object on which in dependence she must repose. One woman, like the bird of old, goes forth from her home, and passing along, finds nought but a waste of desolating waters around, beneath.

Another, with happier lot, passing out, seeks and finds a resting-place in some fond dwelling, where note answers note, which, when no longer breathed on earth, ascends on high, never to be hushed. Such, Agnes, I feel will be your lot if you wed Clairville, and love him."

Now, had my good spirit prompted me, I had one mode of acting still open to me—it was to have disclosed my whole heart to Lady Mary. But, no—and what was the result? Here was laid the first stone of that bridge of sighs over which I was to pass from a world of blissful ignorance to one of agitation, of suffering, and of trial; and the hand of Agnes Dorville had placed it there herself wilfully, blindly.

"But," continued Lady Mary, "the prolixity of a romantic old woman has kept her loitering on her way, instead of executing her message. I came to speak of St. Aubin, and I have only talked of Clairville. You will forgive me, I know, dear child;" and she looked up into my half-averted face with one of her happiest

smiles. "Dearest Agnes," continued Lady Mary, in a grave voice, as she affectionately took my hand, "what shall I advise you to do under these painful circumstances? To ask you to feign might be the request of an able politician, but not of an honest woman. And like him of the other day, who so ably out-argued all his own arguments on Catholic emancipation, we should, no doubt, gain our purposes; but it would be doing evil for good to come out of it; and to ask you through fear or expediency to yield one foot in your judgment would be very blameable on my part. Yet, the truth is, Lord St. Aubin's medical adviser, no later than this morning, pronounced that the slightest agitation might occasion another rupture of the blood-vessel, and that such an event would, he dreaded, prove fatal in his present exhausted state." Lady Mary's voice trembled, and she paused to brush the tears from her eyes. "Poor St. Aubin! When he heard, yesterday, that Mrs. Elton was determined to leave this

to-day, he said, ‘ Aunt, I cannot remain in this uncertainty any longer. You know I love Agnes Dorville beyond anything I ever loved in this world. Mrs. Elton knows it; knew it from the second time I ever saw Miss Dorville. She has repeatedly told me, Agnes was not indifferent to me; but owing to some idle fancy of a childish engagement (which is now perfectly eradicated) with a Clarence Stewart, she did not think it honourable to listen to any addresses; and, indeed, I know she has rejected more offers than any girl this season; but Mrs. Elton says she is certain all will be done away with when she writes to her brother; and until that period she advised me not to address Agnes seriously, for if I did so, I should only mar my prospect of success. But I am fearful, aunt, I am playing a dangerous game.’ ” And, Lady Mary added, “ He paused for a minute, and then rather hurriedly said, ‘ Aunt, a painful thought was excited in my mind the other evening. Yet!—no, aunt! I should be sorry, very sorry, to wrong

one I prize, I love so much. Yet, why has he not a right to gain those affections as well as myself? I never broke the subject to him.' St. Aubin became much excited, and, to confess the truth, Agnes, I was happy when he turned more calm to me.

“ ‘ Do you know to whom I allude?’

“ ‘ Yes, St. Aubin ; no doubt Clairville admires Miss Dorville. We must all admire her.’

“ ‘ Admire ! yes ; but I fancied the other evening there was as much on her part. It was when they were singing together.’

“ ‘ I dare say it was nothing, St. Aubin. You know Agnes has such a soft, sweet manner always, and so much so when singing. Her voice is love itself ; it speaks its very language.’

“ ‘ So it does, indeed, aunt ; it always comes on my ear like what I fancy would be the spell of some delicious sounds heard when waking from a troubled dream. It seems to soothe you into a world of oblivion—a world of its own creation.’

“ ‘ Yes,’ I replied, trying to draw him from his purpose ; ‘ I always long to be alone and close my eyes when I hear her singing.’ ”

“ Yes ; but, Lady Mary, surely, surely,” said I, interrupting her, “ it was cruel on Mrs. Elton’s part, though I know it was for, what she conceives to be, my future welfare, that she has suggested *such things* to Lord St. Aubin.”

I thought a shade of anger passed over Lady Mary’s countenance as she looked at me, and said, “ I do not exactly understand. Do you allude to her deceiving my nephew, or to the mode she adopted of doing so ? ”

I felt a suffocating inclination at this instant to reveal all ; but what ! confess a partiality that had been rejected, slighted ! no, never ! and my cheek flushed.

“ No, Lady Mary ; I allude not to that which is as unfounded as any partiality I may be said to have for Lord St. Aubin. I have no childish engagement to shackle me. I have no regards

for Lord St. Aubin that, under any circumstances, could alter my determination, had his lordship ever seriously addressed me ; but he has never addressed me with more than what I considered mere compliments. Had he, believe me, dear Lady Mary, I should have been as candid as I am this moment on the subject ; and have told him if early impressions did, or ever had existed, that they could have no influence one way or the other relative to himself, however honoured I might be by his proffers of regard. They are, I feel, higher than my ambition either wishes or expects." I paused a moment, and I was not insincere when I added, " No, Lady Mary, I must love the individual, not his advantages ; love is involuntary ; not under our control, though under our guidance." For I did fancy I preferred Clairville, when the recollection of him flashed across me. But no, it was not true affection, it was the offspring of pride, which then suggested the reality of its existence ; but my determination was decisive from this moment.

Lady Mary did not speak directly, but tears were in her eyes, and all her coldness was gone.

“ True, true, dear child. Poor St. Aubin ! Happy Clairville ! Such words as these must not be spoken now. If we must stab, let it be when foe can meet foe in the strength of equality. To tell all this with hopes as buoyed up as his have been would, in the present state of his health, risk his life. At another time I should not fear to inflict such a wound, though I may be wrong in imagining he would soon think lightly of it. Impressions, I know, owe not their durability to that which impresses them, but to that on which they are impressed.”

“ How would you wish me to act, dear Lady Mary ; for I see how it pains you ? ”

“ I scarcely know.”

I reflected a moment.

“ We shall leave this,” I said, “ in a few hours ; suppose I delay going into Lord St. Aubin to wish him good bye until the last moment,” --for he was still confined to the sofa. “ I will tell him, and surely without deception I

may say so, that I trust to see him soon well and happy in London. But if he questions you after I am gone, tell him I am a saucy, proud girl, and that I do not accept second-hand compliments."

When I saw him, it was but for a few moments. He looked far from well, flushed, and agitated. No one was in the room when I went to take my leave. I extended my hand, and he seized it and pressed it warmly. "If I live, Agnes, shall I see you again?"

"Don't speak so despondingly, dear Lord St. Aubin; I trust, indeed, we shall all meet soon again, and that you will be quite well and happy."

"You wish me happy, then?"

"Indeed, none more sincerely, my Lord." I saw he was about to say something more, for his eye brightened, and his cheek flushed. "Come, come, I do not give up my authority yet; I have just five minutes more to exert it; but if you do not remain as quiet as a schoolboy

in the corner, who expects forgiveness when he gets out of it, I must say, adieu."

" Well, well, I am quite quiet ; only let me hear the sound of your sweet voice ; only let me hold this dear hand ; perhaps it is the last time I may ever so listen, so hold."

" Ah ! you should not have told me to talk, for do you not know that is just the way to leave me nothing to say ? We women are such perverse creatures, so perverse, I never do anything I am bid ; and because you are sad, see, I am all smiles." And I tried to make Lord St. Aubin smile, and he did, but it was a melancholy smile, as he said, " You do hope, dear Agnes, to see me well and happy ; would that I could think so ; —may I think so ?"

I scarcely knew what to say, what to do, for he was gazing on me so intently, so earnestly, that I dared not look up. I felt his hand, his whole frame, was trembling. Mine, I know, was trembling from fear.

" Yes, yes, indeed I do, Lord St. Aubin, most

sincerely ; you must not despond ; you will be happy, very happy, and well."

I wished myself a thousand miles off, for St. Aubin said, "Thank, thank you, dearest Agnes," and he raised the hand he held passionately to his lips.

At that moment Mrs. Elton entered the room, and I hastily snatched it away, delighted with an excuse to make my retreat ; and wishing St. Aubin farewell, I left the room, and the next hour saw us on our road to London. Mrs. Elton made no allusion to Lord St. Aubin, and I did not therefore introduce the subject, but her manner was unusually kind towards me.

On the evening of our arrival in London, Lord Clairville came to Mrs. Elton's, but finding a young friend of mine had been a great invalid during my absence, I had gone to spend that evening with her, and therefore did not see him. Mrs. Elton said, when I returned, "Lord Clairville has been here, but so out of spirits, so unlike himself. But I suppose he is sadly fatigued with all his parliamentary duties. He

appears to enter heart and soul into them. He is certainly a very handsome man, handsomer than his brother, but not so formed to make a woman happy as St. Aubin. He is too much of a character, too political. Political husbands are bad things, especially when they have pretty wives. Do not marry a politician, Agnes."

"At present, dear Mrs. Elton, I am quite happy without thinking about marrying."

"Yes, no doubt. I wonder what could have made Clairville so out of spirits, and look so haggard. I did not observe it till he was taking leave. He did so, so strangely, so abruptly."

"Indeed!" I said, cautious to conceal my anxiety about him, for I could see Mrs. Elton was winding round me, in order to draw out something about Clairville.

"Ah! perhaps it was with regard to his brother, for Lord St. Aubin sent a few hurried lines to him, which he wrote while I was waiting for the carriage, after you left us. And now I

remember Clairville did tremble, and turn very pale, when he had read the note. And he read it over three or four times."

"Indeed ! I fear, then, poor St. Aubin is worse," I said, "than we think him. But St. Aubin is very desponding. We shall see Lord Clairville to-morrow, and then we can ask him. I wonder you did not !"

"I could not, for he made some excuse, and was away, though I asked him if he would not come with us to-morrow, to Richmond, to see the Ormonds ; but that he refused to do."

"Not come !" I said, taken off my guard, for I was indeed surprised. "How very strange !"

"So I thought, for he assigned no reason, but that he believed he was engaged. Yes, *believed* he was engaged !"

Nothing more was said on the subject. I must confess, I thought and conjectured much, for no Clairville came on the morrow, nor the morrow ; a week had elapsed and we met him not, nor did he call. Mrs. Elton passed no observation on his absence, and his

name had never been mentioned since the first evening; and I must own London and its amusements appeared vapid and insipid without his presence, and I began to feel that loneliness again, which its first introduction to my knowledge had awakened. Clairville had that life of soul which could breathe an interesting existence into the most trifling objects, and infuse a spirit into all around him. You never felt it more than in his absence, for all was so without effort upon his part, that you could not trace it to his power till you found it was gone, and he was no longer present.

After we had been in London a little more than a week, we were engaged to dine at Richmond, with the Ormonds, the family we had paid the visit to the day after our return; a nice, lively, happy group. They consisted of two girls and two fine, bold boys. Julia Ormond was two years older than myself; all heart and innocence, with enough of beauty to render her pleasing, and not sufficient to spoil her. The other was a child, but Dora Ormond was a

lovely child in her earliest hour, curling hair, roses, dimples, and laughing eyes. Mrs. Ormond, a quiet, every-day sort of mamma person. Mr. Ormond was a man of talent, unceasing good humour, but of very retired habits. Their villa—all a Richmond villa ought to be. Verandas, roses, and trellised flowers of every hue and season; sloping lawn to the smooth waters of the glassy Thames; views of its windings, and its undulating and woody banks.

The day was without a cloud; a day when the heavens appear to bear a loftier cope, and wear a hue whose cerulean transparency shews more fitting canopy for angels' pavilions than for this world of darkening spirits. The eye, wandering thither, seems to carry with it the soul, and the wish, to penetrate into the celestial mansions beyond its ethereal veiling. There is something sad, too, in lifting our gaze above, and reading there of eternal untouched power and perfection; to see holiness and purity giving impress to all inanimate nature;

to feel God in the sunny and starry skies, in woods and fields, mountain heights, and ocean depths ; and then to turn and search into our own hearts, trace man in all his wanderings, watch him in his abodes of pleasure, and his busy haunts, and in vain seek Him there, “that Parent of all good.”

We went early to the Ormonds, as we were to have a boating excursion in the evening. The gay, laughing group were all out on the lawn waiting our arrival. I felt my spirits buoyant to enjoy all around me. It all looked so like home, I felt as if I was a child again. Indeed, I no sooner alighted than I forgot all my London etiquette and silk attire, my bonnet of flowers and ribbons, and a world of troublesome, but I suppose necessary finery. I romped with little Dora ; made *tosties* ; trundled her hoop ; performed wonders with skipping-rope, les grâces and battledore and shuttlecock. At last, fairly knocked up and exhausted with heat and exertion, we all grouped on the grass for the less active diversion of games and forfeits.

The eldest Ormond, a fine handsome Eton boy, was to redeem his forfeit "by leaping over my hair." This was long a riddle. All were in wonder how the thing was to be done.

"What!" said his father, "you an Etonian, and not take a hint from classic lore.

"No, papa, the classics cannot assist me here; and Agnes, I know, will not let me cut off her beautiful hair to make a rope of it."

"No, certainly not, George. I have not seen a London season to learn such humility as that."

"You need not do that, George," said Julia, taking out my comb; "here it is, yard and half long;" and holding it out, said, "now jump over it."

George performed the feat; and peals of laughter and clapping of hands followed his triumph, amidst which we perceived not the approach of a gentleman, who had stopped on the avenue immediately opposite the spot where we were all so merry.

Mr. Ormond was the first to salute him. I jumped up with locks waving down my back like a mermaid. In my confusion I did not recognise the voice, for in my present disordered attire I never ventured to look up at him I thought a stranger. But little Dora, the moment she perceived who it was, flew like a bird, joyfully crying out, "Clairville, my dear Clairville!"

It was, indeed, Clairville. In an instant Dora was on his horse, and he leading it. All had been greeted save myself. I had not certainly advanced quite as quickly as the rest, as I waited to twist up my hair; but now that I was metamorphosed into a more civilized being, I did expect Clairville would make some effort at an acknowledgment. No—though Dora had had her ride, and the groom had taken Lord Clairville's horse, he did not advance towards that part of the green where I was standing with Julia, who had returned to me. At last I said to her, while I almost felt the tears in my eyes,

“ I suppose Lord Clairville does not know me out of my London manners. My romping costume has made me strange to his sight.”

“ It is strangely beautiful, then, Agnes,” she exclaimed ; “ how lovely you looked with all your hair, like a curtain, flung around you ; and then this sweet little Hebe face peeping out innocent as a dove’s.” And the affectionate girl kissed me, for she saw something had annoyed me.

“ Take my arm ; I shall go and attack Clairville. I thought,” said Julia, approaching him, “ when men turned statesmen they became more sharp-sighted. Lord Clairville, I presume, has been rendered the contrary in his new character ; has he not, Miss Dorville ?”

Lord Clairville bowed stiffly ; I returned his salute. Mr. Ormond saw something awkward was going on, for he laughingly replied,—“ You were dazzled, Clairville. We can’t see when the sun shines brightest in our eyes.”

Clairville had not attempted to speak ; but I

saw his cheek pale, and his lips, as they were pressed close, quivered and were colourless. I felt my blood rush like a torrent from my heart to my face and temples; but Clairville, turning away, seated himself beside the quiet, unobserving Mrs. Ormond, and went on talking listlessly to her, till we separated to arrange our dress for dinner.

Was the noble Clairville the most contemptible of beings — a male coquette, — that creature of dishonour, pilfering from the most secret and sacred storehouse its best treasures, poisoning the very life-blood of the heart, leaving it cold, dead, and powerless? And for what does the coquette, either male or female, do this? To feed that vampire of human frailty, vanity. Did I feel no reproach when I reflected thus? No; certainly, I will not confess it was vanity led *me*. No; it was delusion; and now, as I sat down, and the tears came fast flowing, I said, “ I love Clairville. If I love him, it is not for his rank, his influence; if his station were the

humblest, save in mind and soul, I should regard him as I do at this moment."

But did no shadow fall around the recollection of another as it would obtrude on my memory? Had I played no coquettish part? Then why condemn Clairville? Did I not deserve it? For I had dreamed that I was an object of as much indifference to Clarence as now I knew myself to be when first I attracted the attentions of Clairville. But self-love, that ever ready stop-gap (though it often proved but a fence of thorns), was not dilatory in finding the means of excluding reproach. I was led on; I saw not how all must terminate, and I said, does not the conduct of Clarence justify my pursuing the path I have determined to walk in? Never let any human being take the errors of another as companions to direct their footsteps. Our actions should ever be regulated, not by the weakness of our fellow-creatures, but by the strength of right. Our crimes, misfortunes, and follies, with the career of time,

accumulate like the little insect's ant-mounds. For who can watch those creatures, of almost invisible minuteness, labouring with their atom loads, and imagine that such a heap will rear itself beneath their busy work. But thus we labour, day after day, and rear mementos of our ceaseless wanderings, though we may seem incapable of ourselves to have gathered so much ill, while we forget that to do so our industry has never slumbered. Clairville, during the remainder of the day, pursued the same unaccountable line of conduct. Surely, I thought, if he has anything to allege against me, why does he not think it worth questioning about? I was determined he should not imagine that his unkindness had the power of wounding, so I talked and laughed. But heart was not in it, and Julia, I could perceive, saw I was overdoing my part.

She had often talked of Clairville's devotion to me long before I even knew of it myself, and deeming it only some foolish jealousy, she

thought, if we could but speak to each other, all would be well again; therefore, at dinner, she, with all her kind-hearted good nature, endeavoured to manœuvre so that Clairville and myself should sit together; but he was guilty of a rudeness sooner than do so. He had taken Julia into dinner, but when he saw the vacant chair for himself was between us, he said, "Here, George, I must vacate my seat to you. I must sit by no one but my friend. Make room for me, Dora." The delighted child instantly sent her brother away, and Clairville took his chair.

"I dare say," said Mr. Ormond, "George not only thanks you for what you have yielded to him now, but also regrets he is not old enough to persuade you to vacate some other seat in his favour."

"Would to heavens he held it," replied Clairville, in a tone and manner so unlike any that I had ever heard, that I scarcely believed it was Clairville that spoke.

“What! shew the white feather already, Clairville?”

“Is it surprising,” said he, with bitterness, “when all the world wears a mask, and we are trembling every moment, expecting to see another torn away to reveal some more hideous deformity than the last?”

“A mask!” said Dora. “George has such an ugly mask. Tell him not to put it on again, Clairville; it frightens me.”

“I suppose so, my sweet child; it is not time for you to wear one yet.”

“Must I ever wear one, papa?”

“I hope not, Dora.”

“Yes, she must, Ormønd, or she wont be a woman.”

“Well, I will never be a woman, then, Clairville,” said little Dora. “I am your wife; you wont let you little wife wear a mask, will you?”

“I do not think I can get one without, Dora.”

I saw all this was said with the most pointed bitterness, and that that bitterness was levelled at me.

“Take care,” said Julia, archly, “take care, Clairville, whether you may not have to act him of Khorassan, and terrify us all when you are obliged to lift your own veil.”

“I am not conscious of wearing one, Julia.”

“You will allow us to judge of that. But I could this moment lift a veil from off you, Clairville, if I liked; but I don’t like, for I am very angry with you, so you may wear it a little longer, that the punishment may be the greater; and perhaps, after all, like that frightful creature-prophet, you may be consumed to ashes—a fate which all deserve who play a double part.”

“Be assured, Julia, you are one of my votaries at present; at least in one point, certainly; you are in a delusion.”

“Then let the veil remain where it is, for you are suffering much more, believe me, in deceiving yourself than in deceiving others.”

“I wish I could think so,” said Clairville.

I saw, during the whole of this conversation,

he never attempted to catch my eye ; nor had I once, during the whole day, met his ; but after dinner, when all the rest were engaged in merry home gossip, and Clairville and myself were the only silent ones of the party, I ventured to look at him. Our glances met. There was nothing but asking and kindness in mine, for I was now certain Clairville was acting under some false impression ; and I felt no anger, no pride, towards him as before. I did not hastily withdraw my inquiring look from him. His eye rested on me, but it was full of reproach and severity, even of contempt. How unlike that bright approval I was wont to meet there ! He did not join in the conversation, but sat seemingly absorbed in painful feelings, with which all around apparently sadly jarred. Something like the cause of his estrangement flashed across my mind just before we were rising from table, which we all did at the same time, as we were to have a boating excursion before we returned that night.

“That is true,” said Mr. Ormond; “you have not told us how St. Aubin is getting on.”

I saw Clairville at the mention of his name turn a quick look at me. Why, I know not, but I felt the colour rise as he did so. He answered, “I have not received a letter for some days, but in his last he talked of coming up to town without delay; so I hope he is much better.”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Elton, “*we* got a letter yesterday, and I am happy to say he writes in excellent spirits, and will be with *us* next week.”

It struck me immediately that Mrs. Elton had a motive in this speech, she laid such a peculiar emphasis on *we* and *us*. And certainly, Clairville’s countenance confirmed my suspicions, and must have perfectly satisfied Mrs. Elton; for, save once before, and that was the day of Rollo’s battle, I had never seen it so agitated. In some measure I was determined to counteract its effect, for I said,

“Did you, Mrs. Elton? I am glad to hear it.

I did not know you had heard from Lord St. Aubin."

As I spoke I looked rather at Clairville than Mrs. Elton. He seemed to start, but did not attempt to turn towards me. Mrs. Elton was not to be defeated, for she answered quickly,

"No, no, Agnes; it is not for young ladies to know all the secrets of the cabinet; is it Mr. Ormond?"

"No, not even when it concerns themselves, Miss Dorville," said he, and there was a sort of interchange of some meaning between Mrs. Elton and Mr. Ormond. "But come, girls and boys," said he, going out on the veranda, "come, let us dip our oars. The waters are ruddy already from the reflection of Phœbus' night-cap, and if we let him go to sleep he will soon make the air damp with the breath of his snoring."

"Papa, papa, you dreadful man! How can you give words to such unsentimentality, when you have the very personification of sentiment

before you? Look at Clairville, a very statue of sentiments."

It was one of despair, however, he looked, as he leaned against a pillar of the rustic veranda, which was gay with every blossom that makes the air of evening sweet, and was in sad contrast to his wretchedness.

"Come, come, Clairville. What is the matter, man? I will give a comparison more appropriate to your humour, for you look rather Laura Matilda. Come here, my child,"—and the fond father lifted up the little Dora, who was sporting about like a joyous butterfly;—"shall we say the evening is now like your cherub cheek. But if I bid you hie to bed, Dora, I suspect it will be what this eve will turn to, if we don't enjoy it while we can—all tears."

"No, no, papa, not any rain," said Julia; and they all impatiently voted to go immediately on the water, save Clairville. He scarcely appeared to hear what was said, till Mr. Ormond asked him if he would take an oar.

“ Yes, yes, anything.”

“ Then take your flute, Lord Clairville, please” —said Julia, curtseying low in mocking, and then rising on tiptoe, and whispering—“ together with your good humour, good spirit, or whatever you have lost, that used to make you so agreeable.”

“ Well, Julia, I will try anything to please you ;” and he tried to smile.

“ Yes,” replied Julia, quickly, “ anything but knocking Miss Dorville down.”

I had placed myself near him, I believe, in hope of saying one word to him unobserved, particularly by Mrs. Elton. The veranda was not a very extensive one, and the whole family were crowded within it, so that the space was not great for so large and animated a party. I could not retreat immediately ; but Clairville had done so, as if anxious to flee from the presence of every one. I hastily stepped back ; my arm struck against, and went through, the window. I cut myself severely. Indeed, the

pain was so acute, that had it not been for Julia putting her arm round me, I must have fallen.

Though Clairville was the first to offer every kindness, to place me in a chair; though his looks were now all anxiety, all tenderness, still he never spoke, never attempted an apology. My arm was soon bandaged, and I pretended to suffer nothing, fearing to spoil the amusement. But what between the pain and the unaccountable conduct of Clairville, I in vain exerted myself to be in spirits. As we were walking down to the boat, Julia said, not deeming I heard her, "I think, Clairville, as you were the cause of Miss Dorville's accident, you ought to offer her your assistance."

But he either did not or would not hear her, for he walked on without noticing what she had said. In the boat she was more successful, for she contrived he should sit next me. The evening was so serene, the waters so slumbering, the tints so subdued, so shaded, speaking

of nought but heaven and peace. The little boats came gliding on, some sailing, some rowing noiselessly, save the music of their oars. Not a breath was stirring, every bird had sung its lullaby, every insect wing was at rest, and Nature lay cradled on the bosom of Peace. There is something soothing, beyond expression, in a stillness such as this, when we feel we are beside those we love, and whom we know love us. In sweet consciousness that we are thinking each other's thoughts, though no words are breathing to reveal them, instinctively heart-throb answers heart-throb, which beats for us, and us alone. Though eye meets not eye, yet we know with what that eye is beaming. Can we trace from whence this *felt*, but invisible spirit of communion arises. No; for we are the children of that strange, incomprehensible mystery, the soul—that soul, the parent of undying life, wrapping us in a mantle not of earthly weaving. Stars of light such moments as these are in our dark pilgrimage! From

whence is their luminous essence? gone when the dawn of reality bids their shining be hid. Floating around us like the warm breeze of summer, that soft atmosphere of deliciousness never wafts us along with more soothing than when moonlight is falling on sleeping waters, and we are stealing calmly, gently, over their bosom. Surely, surely I felt Clairville was thinking but of me. And was I not happy that he was beside me thus; and could I say I did not love Clairville?—yet not a word had passed between us.

Julia took up a guitar which was by her side, and whispered, “How heavenly music would sound now. One note, Agnes?” She looked across at Clairville, and handed him the instrument. He took it and turned to me, and for an instant he was the Clairville of old, and still lower than Julia, he whispered,

“Yes, Agnes, one note, one last note!” Yet that voice was not so low but I felt the emotion that was in it.

“Yes, Clairville,” I said, “let it be the last note, *if you will* ; but you wrong me, indeed you do.”

“Would to Heaven I could think so ; but I have proof——” he did not finish the sentence, but struck the guitar himself, and commenced the following song :—

How sweet to fancy, the visions that stole
Through Glenmore’s dark forests to Henry’s sad soul !
To his bosom the image of Mary had crept,
More soft than the moonbeam in silence that slept.

Perhaps yet one ray of its tremulous light,
In sympathy soft, had been blest by her sight ;
O Mary, then sacred that beam be to me,
As a gem of remembrance reflected from thee.

More tranquil her bosom, more calm and serene,
More bless’d be her fate, than is placid the scene ;
Not purer, thus murm’ring, the waters that lave
Thy banks, O Glenmore, as they’re kiss’d by the wave.

Chaste daughter of night, then to Mary repeat,
That though distant afar, the vision is sweet ;
In the dread hour of night, still her image shall cheer,
Still to Henry the thought of his Mary be dear.

And now song followed song, till Mr.

Ormond declared we should get cracked voices if we sung any longer in the night air. And indeed Mr. Ormond's prediction of rain was verified, for long before we reached home it came down, in one of those sudden summer showers, and continued so unabated, that Mrs. Elton consented to remain at Richmond that night; but nothing could persuade Clairville to do so.

"No, no, I am just in the humour for a good wetting; I shall enjoy being perfectly wretched;" I heard him say to Julia, as she stood urging him to remain. I went over to them.

"Do stay, Clairville," I said, in a low voice, and I put my head half out of the window as I did so, for I perceived Mrs. Elton was watching, and near to me.

"Stay! What! are you not satisfied with the sufferings you have inflicted to-day, but you must witness more? Agnes, you know I am miserable, madly miserable."

"Wilfully so. I am as true as when you took that pledge you still wear, Clairville."

“I know it,” said he, with a bitter smile, “take it again.”

Julia had stood with her back to us, so that, as we had been facing the open window, our conversation no doubt was unheard by Mrs. Elton; but she was determined it should not continue, for coming over she said, rather crossly for her, “Come, Clairville, you seem to have some design on the well-being of Miss Dorville to-night. You maimed her arm, and now will give her her death of cold standing at this open window.”

“A thousand apologies,” and bowing to Mrs. Elton and myself, he shook hands with the rest, and we heard him gallop off, in an instant, at full speed.

“And Clairville will not believe me !” It was with a bitterness I could scarcely have thought possible I said this, as I held the ring he had returned, in my hand. I soon retired to my own room, and, weary and exhausted, found forgetfulness in sleep.

“How very singular Lord Clairville never

comes to see us. It is now nearly ten days since you hurt your arm, and he has never inquired about it, and we meet him nowhere; and I see he has not left town, for I perceive his name still amongst the divisions in the House," said Mrs. Elton.

"Strange indeed!" I replied; and then stooped to fondle poor little Clary, who lay at my feet.

"Why, I think all your old friends are deserting you, Agnes. It is now upwards of two months, is it not, since you heard from the Stewarts?"

"Yes, indeed it is, Mrs. Elton," and I could no longer restrain my tears. But Mrs. Elton, with her usual affectionate way, coaxed me, and Clary too whined, and scratched, and played around me, as much as to say, "Don't, don't mind them."

"Never mind, dearest Agnes, I love you as the fondest mother; and why throw from you the blessing which is offered? Why not shew

yourself the fine, high-spirited girl I ever considered you, and proudly evince your disregard of such vacillating affections? Why not accept one who is devoted to you?"

"I would; indeed, I would; I only wish I could." For I felt at the moment as if the barbed and wounding slights would drive me to it. "But I cannot love St. Aubin, Mrs. Elton."

"Yes, Agnes, you would very, very soon do so. And here he comes," as Mrs. Elton saw a travelling carriage, with four smoking horses, stop at the door. In another minute he was in the room, gay, happy, and quite recovered.

"Why, St. Aubin, we must send you to another electioneering fight! I never saw you look so well."

"Yes, I am completely myself again; but more thanks are due to your kind recipes," he said to Mrs. Elton, "than to my doctor's, I believe."

She only placed her finger on her mouth, and shook her head.

And then turning to me, he said, “ Agnes, what have they been doing to you ?” adding, in a voice of the greatest interest and kindness,—how ill, how very ill, Miss Dorville, you look.”

“ Thank you, I am now quite well, and shall get all my spirits back when I go into the country again.”

“ When do you go to Tenby ?” asked Lord St. Aubin.

“ We must, I believe, go down to Newtown” (Mrs. Elton’s country seat in G——) “ for a short time before we go to Tenby ; but you go next week, I suppose ?”

“ Yes, if you have decided upon coming there ; for Clairville, when he wrote to me the other day, said he should not come down with me. I am sorry he has left town ; and he never mentions what are his plans. Have you seen much of him ?”

“ No, indeed ; have we, Agnes ?” But I was

busy picking up a basket of flowers I had upset, more, I fear, purposely than accidentally."

"Only twice," continued Mrs. Elton.

"Indeed," said Lord St. Aubin; "his last letter was perfectly incomprehensible; he talked of throwing up his seat, and travelling into Greece. 'At present,' he added, 'I am going to send politics, and everything else, to the devil, so I don't want any of my friends to molest me, lest I should wish to send them in company.' Even Lady Mary, from whom, since he has learned what words and thoughts were, he has never before concealed his purposes, knows nothing of his movements. It is very strange."

"So Agnes and I were just saying when we saw your carriage drive to the door. But you know, St. Aubin, Clairville is too talented not to be eccentric."

"I hope it is only eccentricity," said Lord St. Aubin, thoughtfully; and at the same time I could perceive his attention was directed to me as he spoke.

"What! not arranged your bouquet yet," as

he came over to me. "Did *you* perceive Clairville was much changed?" And St. Aubin purposely placed himself opposite to me.

"Yes, strangely so."

"And did you not ask him why?"

"I ask him! Lord St. Aubin. I dare say he would not have told me," I added, trying to recover my self-possession, which had entirely left me when his lordship first addressed me.

"I suspect you don't think so; and for once I rather imagine you are making a sacrifice of candour."

"But it is in a right cause," replied Mrs. Elton, with a peculiar emphasis and look at St. Aubin.

The week terminated, and we left London for Newtown.

Both Mrs. Elton and Lord St. Aubin had been careful not to give me an opportunity of declaring my sentiments with decision, though Lord St. Aubin lost no opportunity, both in public and private, of evincing what he felt,

but in that indirect manner that I found it impossible to reject his attentions ; and with more pleasure than I had experienced for some time, I left town.

I received a letter from Anna, but nothing of the same spirit of fervour breathed in it in reference to Clarence ; and, indeed, it was unlike Anna's animation throughout. They were soon to leave Worcestershire to go to Tenby. The Stewarts, she said, were gone into Devonshire for some months, so that I should have no chance of seeing them while at Newtown, which was in the vicinity of Copsewood.

We had not been long at Newtown before Mrs. Elton was taken alarmingly ill ; and though Mrs. Elton had perhaps not altogether behaved with the openness I could have wished, I could not but feel partial and grateful to one who evidently had what she considered to be my advancement in life, at heart. I watched and nursed her with anxious care, though her complaint was pronounced to be the typhus fever ;

and she most affectionately urged me not to risk the danger of infection. For three weeks I thought little of myself, as there were but faint hopes entertained of her life.

Our promised visit to Tenby was of course given up. When Mrs. Elton was somewhat recovered, she wrote, asking Mrs. Dorville, Anna, and Lord St. Aubin, to visit her at Newtown, instead of our meeting them in Wales.

I felt something was due to Lord St. Aubin after what had passed between Lady Mary and myself, and I now determined to write to him without at present telling Mrs. Elton, and at the same time to request him not to mention my having done so to her. I was saved the unpleasantness of being the first to write, for a day or two after Mrs. Elton had written to Tenby I received a letter from St. Aubin. He stated how decidedly he had, from the first moment he had known me, regarded me with affection; how Mrs. Elton had led him to suppose it was not in vain, and that my own

words and manner at St. Aubin had given him still fonder hopes ; but that from hints which had lately fallen from Miss Anna Dorville, he feared those hopes were never to be realized. I now hesitated not a moment in answering this letter in the most decisive terms, and the next post brought the excuses of Lord St. Aubin and the Dorvilles. Mrs. Elton wondered, conjectured, but received no clue, for my letter and his own were both concealed from Mrs. Elton and the Dorvilles.

Before Mrs. Elton was quite recovered, I received a most extraordinary epistle from Anna, written even more wildly than was her wont. Its first words were—" Anna Dorville is the rival of Agnes Dorville. I am to be next week made a Countess. How pretty — the Countess of St. Aubin ! I shall be nothing less in Morning Post and Times. " The lovely, the beautiful bride"— " the happy pair"—" St. Aubin Hall"—all are dancing before my dizzy sight, like Tom Thumb and his court in a peep-show. Will you come to

the bridal?—but, no ! Aunt Elton would be obliged to chaperone her poor wronged Agnes. Only think what creatures these men are : he absolutely talked so much of you to me, that one day he forgot I was not the object, and the curtain fell with the chorus ‘ Anna, Anna, will you marry me, my dear Alley Croker ? ’ Only, only think of this. Shall I be the happier when I am a countess ? Well, exchange is no robbery, and I am not happy now. Farewell, forgive me. When shall we three meet again ? Not till the hurly burly is done, though the battle now is lost and won. Tell it mildly to poor Aunt Elton. Though I was her niece, she had set her heart on your being Countess of St. Aubin. She does not like being foiled. What woman does ? especially when she has done some things it would be as well she had left undone, in order to gain that which has ended in defeat. I shall be married in Brussels lace ; it makes one look so fair.”

Poor Mrs. Elton ! she was indeed outrageous.

I never thought it possible that any one generally so mild could evince such indignation. St. Aubin, Anna, and her sister, all came under her lash. Even I escaped not. But I reasoned with her, thus: I *never* would have married Lord St. Aubin, and as you are so partial to him, you see he is now a nearer tie to you than he would have been had I been his wife. But still Mrs. Elton never forgave Anna for, as Anna said, “foiling her plans.”

My refusal of St. Aubin, Anna never knew till long after she had been married, and therefore she, for some time, enjoyed in her own mind the, to her, pleasing thought of having been my rival. Mrs. Elton was too angry to write, and we received the intelligence through the medium of a newspaper report, and, to my inexpressible annoyance, I found my own name inserted instead of Anna’s as the bride of St. Aubin. I cried with vexation; but Mrs. Elton assured me it should be remedied, but it never was; and long, long after this period, did the

kind, affectionate Mrs. Stewart imagine I had become the wife of Lord St. Aubin without having written one line to inform her of my change. I had, previously to this, repeatedly written, but received no answer, and now had ceased to do so altogether.

Mrs. Elton appeared in the country to be ennuyéed to death, and was a very different person from the gay woman of fashion of a London world. But I enjoyed myself infinitely more. The country around us was beautiful, and at every view I caught glimpses of the hills of Malvern—those dear hills of my childhood's home.

One spot in the grounds of Newtown I was never tired of loitering through. And now that the last tinting of autumn's brown was on wood and wold, lingering there as if reluctant to bid adieu to all of summer recollection, I think more interest was added to the picture as it lay stretching and expanding in all its variety of shade. More sadness was breathing in my young heart; more mellowed reflections were

waking in my young mind ; and sympathy spoke more aptly as now all around was falling into sear.

No longer the fields were green : the new ploughed earth was dark as the gnarled trunk and stripped branches of the forest monarch. Here and there red tints partially remained amidst the deeper woods ; at least they were not yet doffed from off those which screened the back ground of the rustic wood-house which was my favourite haunt. It lay embosomed in a little glen, and was erected at the base of the opposite bank on which I now stood in musing reflection. A bridge of picturesque and rude work was flung across what had once been a busy millstream. The noisy wheel had now given place to the brawling sweep of a rocky cascade, falling into a basin, full and open, in the bosom of the little defile, the willow and tangled tendrils laving its waters. The stream then flowed smooth and clear through the labyrinth glade, stealing from human ken amidst

overbowering and steepy banks, like joys from memory's page lost in the depths of time, or name obscured amid the records of fame.

I now stood upon a height that gave all the swell and outline of woodland, field, and brake beneath, and far over open lands, to the finishing of the picture—the Malvern hills. I rested, and seated myself, with Clary by my side. It was beside a tree of peculiar beauty and size. The outstretching and fantastic branches of this oak November's blast had now swept over, and left not a leaf of summer's bloom; yet, hero like, it told of greatness amid decay. The path beneath took its mossy way in rural wildness through copsewood, here and there varied by bolder timber, whose boring roots fibred along the mouldering and broken banks, now clothed in faded herbage and withered sward. The fallen and dried leaves were thick around; the daisy even—that child of winter, was not there; the pensile bell, emblem of drooping pensiveness, was gone; that bright

blue flower, with golden eye, had ceased to speak its language to memory; the anemone, that wild wood-star, had set in night; the hyacinth, of purple dye, type of princely hue, and odour of Araby's sweet breath, was faded and withered too; and those children of twining love, the rose and woodbine, no longer were there, with fondling caress and soft embrace. No yellow gems were decking the emerald velvet of nature's carpet. No; like false ones, they were all gone with summer's sunshine.

Yet, was it November in her frowns of coldness? No; the clear blue heavens looked down in smiles, as if over a world of reviving life, rather than the departing of dying vegetation — rather spoke of the covenant of peace and hope than of the clouds and watery wastes.

Clear and fresh the air came wafting, as if on the downy wing of spring bearing promise, rather than on the darkening raven one of coming winter. From those dear hills of my early home

it came, as they rose now to my view, bold and purple, against the azure sky, while through the space between were tracked out many a brake, wood and land, knoll and lawn, yet on their breast I deemed I might trace the passing shadows as they came and went, shifting, varying, as emotions beneath the gaze of fond and friendly ones.

When I looked around me thus, amidst nature, I seemed to hold that chain which Heaven has thrown to earth to link our hearts and souls to things above, and carry our thoughts by creation's works to Him who bade them be.

Not a sound was waking, and the little hermitage reposed beneath me amidst its loneliness, and told so much of peace that the existence of noisy passion, toil, and suffering, seemed the giant fable of a dream. I loitered to watch the sparkling lake, for though faint, still sunbeams played upon the dimpling surface, and glittered on the falling of the merry waters. The garden, too, hemmed in

with its rustic paling, looked not drear, nor spoke désertion ; though the back ground bore off in glade after glade, bare and russet, the hand of care was visible ; fresh green shaded the ivied porch and wreathed around the pillars that supported its neat thatched roof. Above waved the graceful curl of smoke, tokening of comfort, and all spoke gladsome as the greeting of welcoming friends on the threshold of home.

“ Come, come, Clary, let us go and receive our welcome.” But in the next instant he was barking, and bounded down the slope behind the tree under which I was seated. I called him, but still he frolicked as if round the footsteps of an old friend, and imagining it was some idle straggler from the house, I did not rise, nor advance from behind the screening of the trunk of the oak.

Was it, could it be, that voice so familiar ! so speaking ! which cried in tones of joyousness, “ Clary, good Clary ? ”

“ Agnes ! ”

“ Clairville ! ”

More we spoke not for a space.

“You are glad to see me then, dearest?”

“No, Clairville, you can’t think that,” I said, as I released myself from the arm which for an instant pressed me to his faithful heart.

“And why may I not, Agnes? You turned not from me. Your countenance was beaming on me. And do I look upon that sweet, sweet face again? But when has it been absent from me? Agnes, is it indeed you?”

And he bent on me with all that fondness which none could gaze more passionately than Clairville.

“I might ask, indeed, if it is *you*, Clairville,” as I observed him again, “you are sadly altered.”

“Yet unchanged. No, no, dearest; I have travelled far. I have been wearied, miserable. But I am not weary now; I am not miserable now; I am too blessed, for I question if it be mortal happiness; I tremble to move lest

the spell be broken. But it shan't, shall it ?
Speak, Agnes."

I paused ; I trembled too. For was this heart quite, quite unfettered ? " Yes, yes," I proudly said within ; " what unmaiden-like love to love one that loves not me ! And I beside one so devoted ; so all my own ! Enough. And this heart is Clairville's for ever. For ever did I say ?" These were thoughts quick as the breath I drew. Clairville rested himself against the tree, and placed his hand over his eyes when he perceived I paused to give an answer. The doubt that came on him I saw was dreadful. " Clairville," I said, and touched his arm. But still he looked not at me.

" Speak, speak not, Agnes, if they be not words of promise, nay, words of affection. If they be not, I will fly from thee for ever, nor turn to take one last look."

With what a voice, deep in feeling, in emotion, did he speak ! Did it not vibrate on my young heart ?

“Yes, Clairville,” I answered, and emotion was in my voice no less than in his. But it was a moment more of awe than gladness. A sound, as if of whispering, undefined breathing was around me, as I replied,

“Yes, Clairville, they are words of comfort, they are words of affection.”

He drew a quick, long breath, and uncovering his eyes, looked at me, and a very irradiation appeared to envelop his whole form. Weariness or change was no longer with him, save the change of brightness unspeakable.

“Agnes Dorville! you love me, you will be mine?”

“Thine! Yes, Clairville, thine.”

“Speak, speak it again.”

But I could not, for tears came fast.

“Tears, Agnes! but they are not sorrow’s tears, are they, dearest? You must smile.”

I did smile, and leaning on Clairville, we bent our steps to the hermitage. All within was comfort and elegance, though rustic elegance. The furniture composed of oak,

rudely and fantastically carved; high-backed chairs and rough stools; grotesque ornaments of images and pictures, some beautifully executed in wood relievo, taken from sylvan and pastoral story; the floor richly matted; the windows full of flowers, and hung with white and green draperies. An Æolian harp was in one, while around the room were horns, flutes, and a guitar; small cases of books, writing and drawing materials. On the hearth burnt blazing logs.

We were soon seated beside it, and Clairville poured forth his world of love, of by-gone doubts and suffering, as he answered me when I said,

“But am I not forgiving? Do you remember the day, the evening, you gave me back *this?*” And I shewed him the ring he had returned.

“Forgiving! What are you not? And you do forgive me?”

And could I not forgive, as he sat at my feet on a low rustic ottoman, with a countenance

radiant with devotion to one who, in queen-like consciousness, was by his side—idol of that devotion; but on that devotion I dwell alone. *From that* came all the rush and tide of sweet impulses. It was not from my own devotion towards him I was extracting joy and gladness. I analyzed not the feeling then. I questioned not what I was bestowing for such an universe of tenderness, such a dedication of undivided worship. Others may give love, lustrous as the stars of night, but Clairville's love was light itself. It was his very existence yielded to another.

“And you have not told me, dear Clairville, why you have travelled so far; why you were so wearied.”

“But I have told you why I am no longer weary.”

“Yes; but I ought to have heard that first, or not have listened to the other.”

“Ought you, dearest; and do you bid me talk of myself? How can I, when I am only dreaming of you?”

“ Yet Clairville will talk of me, if he speak of himself, wont he ?”

“ Ah, you know well your power ; yet, dearest, while you thus speak, while you thus look with those soft, innocent eyes on me, it all comes like what the stealing zephyr wakes on yonder lyre.” As the wind just woke the gentle whispering of its music, he said, “ All is wild, yet exquisitely sweet ; I am almost too happy to speak even to you.”

“ Well, shall I go then ? I ought to go, ought I not, and tell Mrs. Elton of your arrival ?”

“ Go, Agnes ! Could you go ?” He looked hurt.

“ No, Clairville, I could not go ; but wont you tell me why you would not listen to me at the Ormonds ? why you never came to see me in London ?”

“ Yet I saw you every day.”

“ *Me*, Clairville !”

“ Yes ; I never left London till you left it ; every day I was watching at Mrs. Elton’s

till I saw you, if it was but for a moment. And when I did not succeed in that, I used to pace opposite the house for hours, when no eye but mine was on it."

"Clairville, how you love me! I am not worthy of so much love, indeed I am not."

"Do not deem it so much, dearest, or I shall think that within thine heart all is not so bright as Clairville asks it to be."

"But my affection can never be like yours, Clairville."

"No, I know it, Agnes; for I am not like you: so beautiful in action, in look, in word."

"I was going to speak some such words as these of you. Only, Clairville, I would tell of that which is your own, which can never die; of a spirit so untouched by selfishness, so noble, that it must be immortal; so——"

"Say on," as I paused.

"No, I can't; Lady Mary shall finish the sentence when we meet; and you may call it sweet echo if you will."

"May I? Ah! Lady Mary! It was to Lady

Mary I owe all this present happiness. As I told you, I remained in London till you left, then your shadow departed, for I said, a few brief days, and then she will be the bride of my brother."

"Then I was right; I thought that was the cause."

"And why, Agnes?" asked Clairville.

"Clairville, your own countenance told me so at the Ormonds."

"And did you observe my countenance while I was suffering under the idea that you were scorning, slighting me?"

"No, Clairville, I could not read you so."

"What! you mean then, when you looked at me after dinner. Yes; my heart did throb beneath that look, Agnes; but the evil spirit of disappointment and galling was caged within it. And will you forgive me when I tell you I wronged you? I said, these are but the wiles of a *vain coquette*! And how could I think you other? That very glance; the very ignorance you affected of my brother's letter, when Mrs. Elton,

in her artful way, alluded to it, *confirmed* me in my delusion with regard to yourself; the misery of thinking you all I did think you, while still I loved you ! It was madness to watch you, yet I did so, as I have seen you, when going out of an evening, handed into the carriage by my brother."

" And were you near me, Clairville?"

" Ever, Agnes, marked the moment of your return home."

" But who told you that I was about to wed your brother?"

" Mrs. Elton."

" Was that all, Clairville? And did you doubt me upon that only?"

" No; but ought I to tell?"

" Yes; you must tell all; every secret, dear Clairville."

" Must I, dearest? you are fondly mine now. And this is your own home for ever now, Agnes," as he pressed the hand he held warmly to his heart.

“ What ! admit a vain coquette into that sacred home, Clairville ? ”

“ Yes, for ever. When I deemed you one, you still retained your influence there. Yet how could I count you less ? You remember how we parted at St. Aubin ? Do you remember, Agnes ? ”

“ No, nothing about it. ”

“ Yes, you do ; I see by that sweet smile, by that naughty eye, you do. ”

“ Well, go on, Clairville. ”

“ When I got to London, I received an anonymous letter, stating that you were deceiving me ; that you meant from the beginning to accept my brother, for his title and fortune, though your affections were devoted to Clarence Stewart. ”

I slightly bent my head, for I felt the ready colour would still come at that name. Clairville did not perceive it, for he went on,

“ This I attributed to Anna Dorville ; yet circumstances were mentioned in it which had occurred since her departure from St. Aubin.

This letter, of course, I heeded little ; but I had scarcely read it before Martin, my servant, after much humming and fidgeting, said, ‘ So, my lord’—(he has lived with me since I was a boy, and I believe often guesses my thoughts before I utter them, though never presuming directly to let me see it)—‘ so, my lord, I find my Lord St. Aubin is quite recovered.’

“ ‘ Quite recovered, Martin ! I fear not. Why do you say so ?’

“ ‘ Why, my lord, because I hear he is to be married directly.’

“ ‘ Married directly ! to whom ?’

“ ‘ Don’t be angry, my lord. I do not mean it forwardly ; but I believe there is no doubt about it.’

“ ‘ Indeed, Martin, that would be strange, if St. Aubin concealed from me such an important event. But who may the lady be ?’ Martin is a worthy, though singular person ; and saying,

“ ‘ Excuse me, but you guess without my

telling; and I know it for a truth, or I should not say it,' and he left the room.

"This really did make an impression on me, for I knew he must think he had good foundation, or he would not have said so much. I never spoke on the subject again; but the doubt had been infused into my mind. The evening of your arrival in town, as you know, I came to see you. You were gone out, and Mrs. Elton at last, in her *soft, quiet* way, informed me you had accepted my brother, and handed me his letter—'for you will rejoice, no doubt, to see it confirmed by him.' My head reeled; I felt deadly sick; I seemed unmanned for some seconds. Fortunately for me, Mrs. Elton left the room for a short period, or I know not what I might have been guilty of. Agnes, I shudder at the anguish of that suffering."

"But your brother's letter?" I asked.

" 'Yes,' he said, 'Clairville rejoice with me; Agnes Dorville no longer refuses to be mine.'

I write in haste, but volumes would not tell my joy.' I tore it into a thousand pieces ; I stamped upon the fragments. Mrs. Elton entered the room. I wished her good evening, and rushed like a madman out of the house. I knew not whither I went, for the morning dawned, and I was still walking impatiently street after street. But let me not dwell on all this, Agnes."

" No, Clairville, for you are happy now."

" Happy ! how happy !"

And he seemed lost in the intensity of that happiness. " But tell on," I said, as he paused.

" I left London. I could not meet my brother ; I could not bear to see any one connected with me ; and, perfectly alone, and under an assumed name I went into Scotland. I had no communication by letter with England, for, in fact, no one knew my address. One day I took up a paper ; in it I read of your marriage. The grief, the sorrow, I felt on that day was unlike any I had experienced before, for I

was conscious that from my home and my kindred I must be a wanderer. To see you the wife of another, and that other a brother as fondly loved as St. Aubin was, was impossible. No time, no change could render it otherwise. My existence spun out in a trance, a stupor; I was like one who walks his way when sleep has deadened every sense. At last, I wrote to Lady Mary, and to her confided all my sufferings and all my plans, and from her heard all the truth. Truth is light; it was too much for my agitated and fevered brain; I became alarmingly ill, and my life was despaired of for several days. Lady Mary travelled day and night till she reached me at a small village in Cumberland, where I had been wandering about recklessly. She related all that had happened at St. Aubin, and your motives for giving St. Aubin the slightest hope. I would have written to you immediately, but I knew what ambitious hopes Mrs. Elton had entertained for you, and I feared she might get

possession of my letter, or use her influence to persuade you not to receive me again."

"And do you not fear her influence now?" I asked.

"No, Agnes; this day has ended all my doubts."

"All, dear Clairville!"

More we said, and ere I quitted that sweet spot of loneliness, I was the affianced bride of Clairville.

When I returned, I found Mrs. Elton was not as ready to receive us with smiles as we might have wished. Of Clairville's arrival she had been informed, though was somewhat surprised to find him returning with me, for when he reached the house, he had sent his servant to inquire if I was at home, but desired him not to mention his name; but Nanette had seen Clairville as he rode up the avenue, and communicated his arrival to Mrs. Elton. Clairville, not finding me at home, was going back to the inn, determining to write from thence to me; but fortunately

inquiring at the lodge, he learnt the direction I had taken, and, dismounting, followed me.

Of course, Clairville lost not an hour in opening to Mrs. Elton all necessary confidence. At first she declared that she was so situated she did not think she was justified in giving countenance to his suit, till she had written to Mr. Dorville, my brother. Then the smallness of Clairville's income. "How could one so unversed in the world manage to enjoy even the comforts of life upon two thousand a-year, which, united with Miss Dorville's fortune, will be all you can possibly make up, Lord Clairville. Why not wait till you can obtain some high office?"

"All this, dear Mrs. Elton, I have already discussed with Agnes. To your first proposal she is anxious herself to accede; but to the other she decidedly objects. She is not ambitious, she says. Mr. Dorville's letter, of course, you await. I suppose I must."

This was some reprieve for Mrs. Elton's speculative hopes. But much of her kindness was

lessened now I was no longer a source of excitement to her. I wrote immediately to Mrs. Stewart, but received a letter from Edward Stewart, saying, his mother's letter should be forwarded to the Madeiras, where she had gone with Clarence and Ellen, on account of their alarming state of health. The letter was cold and formal, unlike all I might have expected from the playfellow of childhood.

Five months stole away, and Clairville was still the same devoted, passionate lover, watching every look, anticipating every wish. Even Mrs. Elton, in despite of her speculations, appeared to be completely won towards him, and he was now almost domesticated at Newtown.

One day, as Clairville and myself were returning from a walk, we met in the avenue a travelling carriage. Only one gentleman was inside. We both remarked how he seemed to observe me; for even after the carriage had passed, he put his head out of the window to look back; and I said, laughingly, to Clairville—

“ Somebody, like yourself, be assured, *au désespoir* at first sight.”

“ That would not surprise me, dearest, for you look provokingly handsome this morning, with all these wild glossy ringlets, which this naughty breeze has been so free to play with. No, no, do not let us go in yet, or look less lovely.”

“ You must let me this once do a little more mischief. Consider, I have only six months more of freedom, and then——”

“ Then what, sweet Agnes?”

But Clairville spoke and looked so much the lover, that indeed I felt what I answered.

“ Then, Clairville, I shall be your happy bride.”

“ Thank you, dearest; I will trust you. Go, be free to flirt as you will.”

And we stopped a moment in the porch as I laughingly entered, and left him, saying,

“ Farewell, Clairville, I am on mischief bent,” and I turned round to enter the drawing-

room, the fond glance of Clairville following my footsteps. I opened the door, and in an instant I was clasped in the arms of a stranger.

“ Agnes ! sister ! ”

“ My brother ! ” I said. The sudden emotion was so unlooked for, so unthought of, that I fainted.

When I recovered, and met the fond anxious glance of that brother, how shall I tell of the rush of new and exquisite feelings ! Nothing like aught I had ever known before.

“ Dear, dear brother ; and am I your sister ? ” as I threw my arms round his neck, and sobbed with painful delight. One instant, one touch, one word, and ages of affection had sprung up in my young heart ; years of familiar endearment seemed to have passed in this brief space. A knot was tied which no earthly power might sever. Like the essence of existence, though knowing not whence it was, a feeling was infused, invisibly acquired, but possessed with fervour.

“ Dearest brother !” I said, as I affectionately lent on his encircling arm, and brushed from his high white brow the black and raven hair, “ How handsome you are ; I expected to see you old ; but you are young ; you are handsomer even than Clairville.”

“ Indeed, lovely sister, I could say as many sweet things to you ; but they are old news to you ; stale, like our Indian news, when it arrives.”

“ But it is news to you when it does come ; and do let me hear them from a brother’s lips. I have never heard any from those lips yet, dearest Henry.” And I again wept with joy to be near that brother.

“ No, sister, dear,” as he kissed away those tears. “ I must leave that fine fellow I saw walking with you to say all those pretty things. And may I ask if that is Clairville ? if so, I am complimented, indeed.”

And before we joined Mrs. Elton, my brother had congratulated me on the happy prospect before me ; for a friend of Clairville’s had been

my brother's also in India ; and from report, he had heard much of him, and that most favourable ; so that, perhaps, Clairville, though delighted, was somewhat surprised, when my brother extended a cordial hand at their first introduction, and said,

“ I am most happy, Lord Clairville, to have met you.”

Lord Clairville bowed, but my brother quickly proceeded,—

“ A bond of acquaintanceship has sprung up on my part, Lord Clairville, with you, through your old schoolfellow and friend, Folkes.” And in a few hours Clairville and Henry Dorville were as the intimates of years.

“ Mrs. Elton could not exist without society, therefore we had a constant round of visitors every day ; so that Clairville found it somewhat difficult to gain my undivided attention ; and, indeed, mine was wholly devoted to my brother. I could think or look at no one else. So elegant, so frank, and open ; and he appeared equally

delighted with me, as he fondly kissed me when I met him alone in the corridor, before we entered the drawing-room.

“ Let me look at you, Agnes, dear. Ah ! indeed, indeed !” said that kind, dear brother, “ I left her but a pretty child, and what do I find my sister ? I hope I shall not spoil her if I say she is the most perfectly beautiful being I ever saw. Dear, dear girl, you in my eyes seem to want nothing ; mind, manner—all are yours. May you be happy, happy as your brother’s dearest wish !” And he took my hand in his arm, and with all a brother’s pride, led me into the drawing room.

These were moments of unalloyed, unmixed delight and pleasure, for I caught the joyous looks of Clairville, as they fell on us as we entered, and a sweet bond of union seemed to unite us all.

How much are all the finer feelings of our nature heightened when awakened and participated in ; when, surrounded by kindred ties,

we see a partial parent, or loved brother or sister, gladdening beneath the reflection of our gladness !

“ Well, I think, Agnes, you have taken advantage of my permission. What ! not one word for me to-night ?” as Clairville addressed me after dinner. “ But I wonder not, for your brother is one of the most engaging personages I have been fortunate enough to light on for a long period. We have not differed once.”

“ How tiresome, Clairville.”

“ You mean to try a different mode, then, I presume, Agnes, when I tell you what I am going to ask. Do just come out on this moonlit lawn that I may whisper it to thine ear, dearest.”

“ What will all these demure-looking people say,” as I looked round a formidable circle of dowagers and tittering misses, “ if they should chance to observe me, Clairville ?”

“ Nonsense, Agnes. Why, those prattlers might as well question whether the sun was dimmed in native lustre, because forsooth a cloud obscured it from mortal vision, as to

question aught of you, Agnes. See," he said, as he pushed open one of the casement doors, "See how lovely the moon is sleeping on all around. Would it not sanctify our love to plight it beneath such a canopy, beneath stars luminous as our hopes?"

I had stepped out on the lawn.

"I said, *our* hopes," continued Clairville; "what a breathing of sweet sound is in that little word, *our*. Well does royalty use *we*; I now feel how much it expresses. For when I say it, and feel it blends thy name with mine, what a realm of untold, of inconceivable blessedness am I heir to! Say, dearest Agnes, shall this circling moon come back in her course again and again, and not see our names registered as one in those starry heavens above? Say but *yes*, beneath their shining. See how they look upon us, pure, bright, unperishable as the tie which is to unite us—that tie which, though linked at the altar of earthly mutability, can never know earthly severing. Think, oh think, Agnes, in heaven it is knit. Think if,

while earthly, it is so transcendently beyond words to speak, what will it be above, amidst those diamond paths of light. Think, if I gaze, in throbbing rapture, to see thee thus in mortal loveliness, what shalt thou be when glittering in the circlet of angels, amidst those palaces of celestial, untouched holiness. Say but yes, then, that I may feel our souls are united for eternity. Tremble not thus, dearest. What fear you ? What doubt you ?”

“ Not you, Clairville, best, noblest.”

“ Then, what ?”

“ Not the career tracked out for thee, love, by that Almighty One who speaks joy and peace ineffable ; stamps the promise of what is to be ours on all the godlike harmony around us ; on such a night wakes nothing but angels’ meditations, bearing as it were our souls on their celestial wings to behold and know a foretaste of their unspeakable home of bliss.”

“ Is it not strange, Agnes, how we can be such fallen creatures, when feelings like ours

of to-night find habitation within us; when we have such an universe as this to reign in—such objects to bid our minds hold high and untainted their intellectual throne?”

“ Yet, Clairville, with all this impress of divinity around, with even thee and all thy tender fondness to exalt me, to support me, as my mind’s eye looks into the tracking path before me, I tremble to look at it; tremble to think what a weak, fragile being I am,—so full of error, so clothed in vanity, when I behold reflected in the mirror of light what I ought to be.”

“ Tremble not, my own pure love, tremble not in thy very greatness; the mind that can trace an image of that light thou speakest of must sketch from its own resources. It is thyself thou beholdest, but thy humility trembles to acknowledge thine own beauties reflected on such an unbroken surface.”

“ Thine is the language of love; love that is blind, Clairville. But why do I fear? why do

I doubt?—because I feel, I know, love is not immortal.”

“ Not immortal, Agnes ?”

“ If it be, Clairville, while it dwells in this earthly tabernacle, it cannot burn without alloy. Yes, believe me, though waking, watching, may be around the altar, still it is mortal’s waking, it is mortal’s watching. And despite all, though the flame may not know a quenching, still there are moments when there may not be such breathings around it as now ; and it shall know a dimming.”

“ Then it is me you doubt, Agnes ?”

“ Say not so. No, dear Clairville, I doubt myself alone ; doubt that it may be my own hand which may shew truth, even through the veiling of love. I fear your love may be less, not from instability, not from weakness, but from your very perfection of character. Think, Clairville, all the sudden, the varied, the high duties I have to fulfil : it is a very fearful thing to contemplate.”

“ But shall not this arm uphold you, dearest ? Shall not this heart shelter, protect, adore you ? Will six months give thee so much more thought than six weeks, foolish, timid, lovely being as thou art ? And thy brother, too, shall he not watch over you ? You will not deny him the blessedness of carrying a remembrance of thy happiness with him as he bears his footsteps from thy home, thy own home, Agnes ? ”

“ My own home ! ” There was something to me of melancholy in the words.

“ Yes, Agnes, thy own home ; thy immortal home — thy husband’s affections : say, say, shall he not ? ”

And a silence as of the grave followed the beseeching, the impassioned echo of Clairville’s words. When it was again broken, it was soft as a whisper’s note.

“ Speak, dearest.”

“ Yes, Clairville, be it so.”

Six weeks had passed and gone since this bright, moonlight eve. And on that very lawn, when the sun was shining jocundly on all beneath it,—on that spot of earth, were to be seen gay and laughing ones, adorned in bridal pomp, joyous as the May flowers that sent their odours and their bloom to deck the festival.

May has come and gone many a time and oft since that smiling morn. Yet methinks, I now look again upon that very morn of May as on a picture, but amidst the group I own not my identity. Trace on that picture two forms, one arrayed as the bride. She then was young, very young, and adorned with all the freshness youth imprints on brow, and cheek, and eye, and smile. Locks which nature had taught to flow in curl were on this morn half hid beneath the graceful veiling of Brussels lace, while through its folds might be seen the coronal of rich jewellery, around a brow on which thought nor care had not yet left a trace.

The girlish form was attired in robes not less

delicate than that which shaded her blushing face. All was white, and as pure, as, I trust, was the young heart that beat with new and agitating consciousness beneath the folds of that soft drapery. Gems encircled her arms, and glittered on that throbbing bosom. Yet one precious knot, more precious than all to him who was by her side, was there. It was a simple gift, endeared by fond remembrance and sweet association—a bunch of blue and silver forget-me-nots; and the glance of that rejoicing bridegroom told its tale of thanks, which none might read save the trembling bride. Though trembling, still felt she proudly; for he who that day plighted his truth to her was truth and honour's self. Talent exalted, beauty distinguished him, peerless above his peers. None looked so noble, none looked so enthroned in happiness. The fervour of youthful passion was gleaming in that flashing eye of blue. Clairville, whoever trod, this earth more blest than thou when thou ledst this bride down the gay saloon! Even now I

dream again of that solemn moment; hear thy pledging words of dear sincerity; feel the supporting arm of an affectionate brother, as he yielded me to thy sacred trust; see the tears of young friends falling like April showers, e'en though sunshine is gleaming around.

Then, when all was over, the pause of expressive stillness, and then the glad burst of warm congratulation. How then, how now, like a dreaming vision. Then poured forth the village peal, making the air music as their rounds came swelling over the distance. I see now the smiling faces; hear all the merry laughing picture; the whole is before me as it was on that morn of May; that green lawn, its flowers, its rustic decorations; the music that came floating from veiled bowers; and then the rich canopy of blue, as it rose supported by wreathed pillars of orange blossom, garlanded with nature's choicest gems. Beneath that canopy was spread every luxury, and all spoke happiness.

There, between a loved brother and an adoring

bridegroom, sat that young bride. Was it the creation of a fancy spell, indeed; for its place is no longer known. The young bride has left her seat beneath the canopy of blue. Swiftly is she borne from all of kindred. But he who is alone beside her now is more than all of kindred, for she is his own dear wife. What a world of trust is this. Like the glad bark, woman thus goes forth; dependent, yet confiding; doubting, yet not fearing; her future course directed but by one controlling hand. As that may guide her, so on she tracks her way, hope amid all can still support. Though clouds overshadow, though tempests swell, still He who bade those waters be can speak them into calm, and guide that troubled wanderer into a haven where all is unwaking peace.

“To-morrow is the third anniversary of our bridal, Agnes.”

“Yes, dearest.”

“ It seems but yesterday, love, does it not ?”
said Clairville.

“ I cannot reckon so,” I replied.

“ And why ? for while you tell me so, you smile on me as kindly as this little laughing urchin,” — the fond parent played with the rosy boy he held in one arm, as he sat on the sofa, looking up into mother’s and child’s face, with all his soul of affection beaming there.

“ And why, naughty mamma, wears time longer with thee ?”

“ Because Clairville has marked every moment of three happy years with something that has bid her treasure each as they passed.”

“ Art thou not jealous, then, my own sweet wife, that thy husband has not so calendered time ?”

“ No, Clairville, I would not wish it so ; for I often think of self—you never ; and then perhaps the registry would tell against me.”

“ Tell against thee ! no, never ; thou art still my very life !”

“ Am I, dearest, best ? I would ever be so.”

“ Heavens !” exclaimed Clairville, as he suddenly started up ; “ I trust St. Aubin is not worse ;” (for he had latterly been alarmingly ill again.) “ I see his servant pressing on a foaming horse to the front door.”

We had since our marriage been living not very far from St. Aubin Hall, at a small place belonging to Lord St. Aubin. But though residing so near, little communication had been kept up, particularly on my part.

Anna, latterly, had become so completely overbearing in manner, so almost, I may say, dissipated in habits, that she ill accorded with our quiet, cheerful home. St. Aubin I pitied. He had become a shadow of his former self. All of buoyancy was numbed, and the only strong feeling that ever now displayed itself was hatred of his wife. Yet his affection for Clairville was unabated. To me he was cold and reserved, but ever kind.

We now received a note from Lady Mary,

who still occupied her own private apartments at St. Aubin, though scarcely ever mixing with its society. She wrote to beg Clairville and myself would not lose a moment in coming to see St. Aubin ; that it was now the only wish he appeared to be sensible of, for there was little hope he could live many hours. We did only arrive a few hours before he expired. Lord St. Aubin had always been delicate, and latterly, the wretchedness of his wedded life, for he was naturally domestic, had completely broken both spirit and constitution, and he had, like a thousand others, flown to dissipation for forgetfulness.

He was conscious his wife loved him not. He had married her in disappointment and disgust, which she, to obtain rank and title, had used every artifice to make him do.

Anna St. Aubin was capable of loving with passion. Her affection, like every other feeling of her heart, was strong and impetuous, directed by the discretion of cunning, but un-

governed by principle. If she could love with fervour, which she did—though it was not her husband, and that he knew,—she could hate with like fervour. Hers, too, was the hate of active revenge. I had, I know not why, been the object of that hate from the first hour of her knowledge of me; Clarence Stewart equally that of her love, while her ambition had ever pointed to Lord St. Aubin. But that was less than her love for Clarence, for she would have sacrificed even that, had it obtained her the affections of Clarence; but those could never be hers.

At his dying hour, St. Aubin did not wish to see his wife.

“ I should,” he said to Lady Mary, “ wish to pass from this world calmly, with only my better feelings wakened by those I love. And now,” as he looked round on Lady Mary, myself, and Clairville, he said, “ these are all who draw my mind to earth. Agnes ! Clairville !” as he held our hands in his, “ how could I ever have dreamed of dividing two beings so united in mind and soul ?

Strange, Clairville," he said; "but I feel a satisfaction, a joy, that it is thy boy shall hold on our generation. Had it been other, the root being tainted, there would have followed, perhaps, but blighted branches. I feel glad, gentle Agnes, that thy child shall yet bear my name. Neither of you know how I have had my last testament regulated; for she would say it was thy doing, Agnes, for she hates thee. Beware of her; for thou art but a dove,—she, a very serpent. Heaven pardon me; but I forgive her."

"Then see her, will you not, dearest St. Aubin?" I said.

"Do you wish it?"

"Yes, indeed I do; I wish you to wish it also."

"It is the last wish I can grant you, beloved wife of thou dear, dearest brother! One word. Let her not; let not Anna ——"

And the voice of St. Aubin was growing thick, and the pale, deadly white was gathering round his eye and mouth.

“ Let her not,” he said, “ Clairville, inscribe her name on the monument that marks my grave. Let not deception unsanctify the spot. Place it thyself, for thou hast ever sincerely loved me. Here let me rest, and die in your united arms,” as he raised himself, and Clairville and I supported him.

“ Weepst thou, sweet angel? Pray that I may be thy brother in heaven.”

Lady St. Aubin entered. He extended his wasted hand; pressed it to his lips, as he said, “ I forgive thee, Anna, all the pain thou hast cost me.”

And thus expired, in the pride of manhood, the Earl St. Aubin !

Had his course taken a right channel, he would have been an ornament to society, a benefit to his fellow creatures, and a blessing to his family. But he married, in a moment of irritation, a proud, imperious, heartless woman, and became the victim of his hasty passion.

Anna concealed, or rather strove so to do, the anger and jealousy she experienced, when she discovered that her husband had left every possible benefit from herself, and that a thousand a year jointure was her sole claim. Much more he had power over, but that he strictly settled upon me, even independent of Clairville. Of course, the estates and title devolved to my husband.

Clairville had been warmly attached from earliest infancy to his brother, and his new honours and wealth brought little of satisfaction to his now sorrowing mind.

One individual, I fear, did know a triumph; it was Mrs. Elton. She had gained her aim, for I was now Countess St. Aubin.

Mrs. Stewart had returned with Ellen and Clarence, and both were recovered; when I found she was again in England, I immediately wrote to petition for Ellen's company. Indeed, my invitation extended to the whole family, but was only accepted by Mrs. Stewart and Ellen. Mrs.

Stewart was only to pay me a flying visit. Ellen had promised to remain some months.

The meeting between Mrs. Stewart and myself was evidently not unmixed with much painful feeling ; and as she pressed my dear little child to her affectionate heart, her tears came fast.

“ And my Agnes a mother ? Why, she looks but herself a child to-day, does she Ellen ? But is not Ellen grown a woman, too, Agnes ? ”

And a very pretty one ; for Ellen Stewart was what might decidedly be styled pretty. Simple, elegant, and rather *petite*, with a profusion of golden curls falling over a face so dove-like in its gentleness that to a casual observer it would have been called insipid. Yet that soft blue eye could speak a thousand affectionate and glad things ; that transparent cheek could flush and dimple brightly ; for Ellen Stewart’s heart was formed in no common mould. It was as noble as it was humble ; as sincere as it was gentle. Though the violet is veiled in leaves, is its hue less deep ? its sweetness less rich ? Timidity

was ever around the fair Ellen ; but wert thou less deep in soul, less rich in worth ?

Two years more went on. Clairville, (for so I shall continue to call him,) in his political career, was still the same noble and distinguished character. Perhaps to me, selfishly, this afforded not so much gratification as it ought to have done, for his attendance in the House drew him so much from home that I seldom saw him in London ; and in the country he was occupied by a thousand duties calling on him, and Clairville ever fulfilled them strictly. But I ought to have been contented, for his affection was still unchanged.

We had just returned after a parliamentary session, and music and revelry were again to run their merry tide in the princely saloons of St. Aubin Hall.

Three dear friends were hourly expected to add to the many guests beneath that hospitable roof. But the lady of the mansion sat not at that hour amongst the many. She was alone,

save with one cherub boy, and one lisping infant on her lap. The boy fondled a little Blenheim, and both were at her feet in romping play.

“Mamma, Clary does not love play as he used.”

“No, my boy, Clary is growing an old man.”

“Shall I ever grow old, and not love play?”

“I trust so. You love it now dearly, don’t you, Harry?”

“Not as well as I love pretty mamma,” and the happy boy kissed that pretty mamma.

“Mamma, I heard a great secret to-day. But I may always tell mamma great secrets, papa says, but no one else.”

“And did papa tell Harry this great secret?”

“Yes.”

“And what is it?”

“I must whisper, for Bertha will hear.”

“But Bertha won’t understand.”

“Yes, that’s true. Well; do you know papa says I am going to have a new aunt; such a nice aunt?”

“And who is she, Harry?”

“Hush ! stop ! I hear her voice. It is Ellen ; it is, it is !”

I could not rise. The nurse had taken Bertha from me. Harry had flown down to the portico, from whence he had heard Ellen Stewart’s voice—for she it was who was to wed my brother. Why did I not fly to meet that dear, that early friend ? Why sat I, cold, powerless ? Another voice, another form, was there. Strange, inconceivable. I was a very mystery to myself.

I, a loving, faithful, devoted wife ; a mother, too, and tremble to hear that voice. Impossible ! Impossible !

I brushed back my hair ; I pressed a hand to my throbbing temple. I even smiled at my strange emotion. I looked at my own reflection in the mirror ; it was frightfully pale. I heard footsteps ; they were not Ellen’s alone. She was in the room ; I saw her ; more I did not see ; I fell senseless into her arms.

When I opened again my eyes, they looked upon Clarence Stewart. But how changed !

but still handsomer than aught my imagination had ever conceived of beauty. But of that let me not speak,—let me not think of that pale face,—oh, the agony that was there! One comfort, I thought I had it, was, that no eye but his and thine, my own Ellen, poured its questioning on the mystery of my sufferings; but it was not so, for Anna had come to the door, seen all, and past away from it again unperceived. I recovered.

“I am sorry to give you such a welcome, Clarence.”

The start he gave! But I went on.

“We have been so dissipated lately that, indeed, I am quite knocked up. But I will go and rest before dinner.”

Yet Clarence turned not round.

“But where is my brother?” and with Ellen I left the room.

To analyze the impulse of that moment I never turned; had I, it would have risen a spectre before me—a sort of phantom of an

unidead horror. When we met again, I was leaning on the arm of my husband ; I had presented Clarence to him, and then turned to speak again to him. He was now smiling and talking gaily. To have heard or seen us, you would have said we were but the intimates of a day—the past was so deeply buried from word or look.

Anna St. Aubin was among our guests to-day, and I could read the bitterness of the glance that, e'en despite of herself, she could not conceal. Mrs. Elton was there, too, in full pride, for as I deemed I owed her much, I was ever ready to gratify this foible and treat her more as the mistress than the guest. Anna from this evening formed her plans of revenge against me. I heard her say to Clairville,

“How pale and weary Agnes looks to-night.”

It recalled me to myself, for I was sitting listlessly on the sofa. Clairville came over to me.

“Agnes, love, you are not yourself to-night. Is she, Dorville?” as he addressed my brother, who stood talking to Clarence by the arm of the sofa on which I was seated.

“Come, I shall not call you the gas of St. Aubin to-night, if you sit thus dull.”

“You have but to apply the match, Clairville, and I shall be up and bright again.”

“Do not be too proud,” said Anna, as she saw the kind looks of my husband, as he offered me his arm, and said,

“I think, Mr. Stewart, you sing. Come, Agnes, will you try your voices together? Let us go to the music-room.”

“Take care, my Lord,” said Anna, not to be silenced; “do not be too proud. Never compare your wife to gas again.”

“And why not, Lady St. Aubin?”

“In the first place, never think she is like anything that is suddenly the rage; fashions are so versatile. Besides, gas, though brilliant, is very inflammable; but withal often vanishes in a moment and leaves the world in darkness.”

“When we make comparisons,” replied Clarence, we only compare as much as bears resemblance. To tease a metaphor is to put

it out of temper. It is no longer pleasing, Lady St. Aubin."

"Pardon, Mr. Stewart ; I stand corrected, and am now ready to be put into temper by listening to the sweet harmony you and my Lady St. Aubin are about to favour us with."

"I shall, be most happy to render you any service. Allow me to offer my arm."

"I said fashion was versatile. But to prove I stand corrected, do sing this old thing for me, Agnes,"—as after we had sung quartetts, and trios, and duetts, innumerable, Anna selected a song, saying,

"Clarence, be kind enough to present this to Agnes."

"I am tired, Anna."

"Pray sing it ! Pray do !" said Clarence, placing it before me.

I knew not what the song might be. (It was the old, but beautiful one of "Mary, I believed thee true.") I looked at the name; above it was written "Clarence Stewart," and under it, "Agnes Dorville."

“ Let me play the accompaniment,” said Ellen. “ Take care Clarence,” as Clarence stood, as it were, rivetted to the spot.

I sung it, and Clairville declared I must sing it again ; I did so.

“ One more duet,” said my husband, “ and I will ask no more. But yours and Mr. Stewart’s voice harmonize so delightfully, I must have one more.”

But Clarence Stewart had left the room.

“ Did you not know Mr. Stewart’s aversion to the name of faithless Mary ?” said Anna ; “ his gas always goes out at the bare allusion to inconstancy.”

“ More probably,” replied Ellen, rising from the piano, “ it was its constancy that drove him away. I see it is an old song of his own. He is tired of it.”

If Anna was trying to work upon Clairville’s mind, it did not appear she was doing so with any success ; for to Clarence he was even more attentive than he was to my brother.

Ellen’s marriage, on account of a very near

relation's sudden death, was deferred for some months, and she was to remain with us during that period. Clairville declared Clarence must remain also. As for Clarence, from the first week after his arrival, he seemed another being; the life of every sport and every amusement; he flirted with Anna, and almost seemed half inclined to fall in love with Julia Ormond, who was staying with us. We had private theatricals. Clarence was the hero of every play, the director of every charade; he rode, sung, wrote poetry,—in fact, was the very knight of chivalry. Yet was he not less the orator and leader of the dining-room, or the conqueror in the field of sports. When we met in society, Clarence never seemed to seek or avoid me, talked freely, indifferently; but if accident threw us together alone, I could not be insensible to the strange and sudden change. I wished Clarence gone; I must, I will confess I was wretched. Apparently, the roses that adorned my bower of domestic peace were blooming fresh as ever;

it was my eye alone that saw the serpent's track was there. I did see, and shuddered. I could not chase it thence and crush the daring of that stinging reptile. I sought security in blindness, advancing with closed lids to the precipice's edge, ere I plunged into suicide. I cannot if I would trace on the path that led to such a madness. Had I not loved my husband when I wedded him? Did I not love him now? The sad, sad weight of consciousness that came with such questioning. Must I now confess it, one word, one look from Clarence Stewart fell brighter then on this weak, frail heart than all of love Clairville had ever breathed? But no; I did not confess it then. It was buried deep even from my own guessing. Why was it ever called forth from its dark tomb? And didst thou, Clarence, bid that spirit rise? Wast thou not affrighted to behold that dead, corrupted thing walking forth, where only life pure and blessed ought to have taken its way? When thou lookedst

upon it, why didst thou not bid it go and be at rest ?

My child, my own bright boy, was at his mother's feet. It was in the very room Clarence and I had first met after that long, long separation.

"More pictures, mamma, of such great men. See how they ride. Harry would like to ride with them."

I had not been thinking of Clarence. No ; I had been gazing on my child, and he was all innocence ; for his dwelling was still in a world of innocence. When Clarence entered, I raised my eyes ; they met those of Clarence. I bent over the book my boy was holding up, not to look on the great men, but to hide my own weakness.

"Come and see them, Stewart," said Harry.

Clarence approached the table. Harry soon flung down his book tired, and bounded out of the room.

A painful silence followed. I had been work-

ing. A small filigree souvenir was lying on my box. Clarence took it up. He held it. His hand opened it. " Agnes Dorville" was written within it ; he read the words aloud, then paused ; yet I looked not up : I question if I moved. I thought for a voice to break this silence. At last, he said.

" Agnes, I gave you this."

" Yes, Clarence."

" In it are lines I remember well, in which the mutual promise was written, that not one week should pass that should not give a journal of all our thoughts and all our —. No matter. But how many passed, and not a line even to my mother !"

" Yet, Clarence, how many were written, and remained unanswered ?"

" Never. Tell me not so. When, when ?"

" Clarence, it was so. But let us not go back, Clarence."

" Yes, for one instant."

" No, Clarence ; you forget."

“ Forget what ? ”

“ It was a painful moment. My hand was on the table ; he was leaning over it, looking into my pale face, as if, indeed, all but the long past was forgotten. He took my hand.

“ Tell me what have I forgotten ! Would that I could. But, no ! remembrance will follow me even to the grave.”

“ Hush ! in pity hush.”

“ No ; one word I will ask, and thy answer shall be for ever an unbroken seal on these lips. Yes ; I will look back, if but for a breath’s span, into that Eden that once was mine, though a flaming sword be there to bid me begone. I will ask, did you write to tell that thou couldst change ?—that thou couldst be false ? Didst thou think me so ? Speak, Agnes, speak, and then let me live a life of blessed agony.”

“ Did I ask *you that*, Clarence Stewart, when every word you gave me back was a dagger ? But what avails it now ? ”

Clarence looked wildly at me. He dropped

my hand,—he flung his head on his own clasped ones on the table, while I might hear the heaving of his bursting heart.

“ This I cannot bear. Clarence, you will drive me mad.”

“ No, no ! Agnes, I am a man again ;—no, I will not ask thee more ;—I know it all ;—yes, I read it all in this very spot. I have read a thousand, thousand things to confirm it ; yes, they have told me since ;—but no more ; it makes me strangely blest. Yonder, Agnes, is the sun ; it has never changed ; clouds have come and gone, but that is all—yes, that is all. But I shall see the letter you say I wrote to thee. I will but whisper it to thee. Agnes, it was not thy own Clarence that wrote that letter. Shall I see it ?”

“ Yes.”

A footstep approached. It was Lady St. Aubin. How does guilt teach deception ! I talked gaily ; I smiled ; but bitterness was within. Clairville soon after entered. What

wounds did his kind, partial looks inflict on this faithless heart. I could have wept at the soothing, anxious voice with which he spoke; but tears could not wash clean that faithless heart; tears could not blot out the wildness of its erring madness. I loved Clarence. I felt I had never loved aught else.

“Agnes, Lady Mary has been saying she thinks you look very ill. It will not do to let these roses fade so soon; will it, Stewart? And you think they are fading, do you not; for you saw them when they were brightest?”

“They are bright enough now,” said Anna; “a breath of the Copsewood air has wafted them back again, no doubt, Clarence.”

But Clairville would not, or did not, mind what she was saying, for he said:

“Suppose you take a ride? Julia and Ellen are going; I will put you under Mr. Stewart’s charge. Will you escort Lady St. Aubin?”

Clarence bowed, but made no further answer.

“And why cannot you come, Clairville? do

come," I said ; for indeed I wished it. While near my husband, I felt a sort of security against my own erring heart.

" You never ride with me now."

" Do I not ? I will to-morrow ; I cannot, love, to-day ; I must go to a county meeting ; my presence is of moment there."

" How I hate all these county meetings."

" But you love me to follow up my undertakings."

And that wronged, affectionate husband kissed his wife fondly, as he yet delayed, after Clarence and Anna had left the room.

" You do look ill—out of spirits. Has my Agnes any wish her Clairville cannot gratify ? Shall I come with you ?"

" No, Clairville, no."

" What then, dear ?"

I could no longer restrain the swelling misery within. I fell sobbing on his bosom, and had almost, with desperate effort, bared my whole soul to that noble, generous being.

“ Never heed me. But you look strangely at me.”

“ No, I don’t. But this is not your wont; I never saw thee thus; it makes your loving husband wretched, and he was ever blessed. *That* is the strange look, *nothing else*; no, nothing else.”

In bounded little Harry with, “ Come, pretty mamma, pony wont wait any longer; he is pawing, and so tossing his proud head.”

“ And are you going with pretty mamma? you must take care of her, for papa is not going.”

“ Yes, yes, that I will; for pony can gallop quite as fast as mamma’s Diamond.”

“ Indeed he is,” said Clairville, “ a brave pony.”

And the little prattler, with papa’s hand in his, left the room.

“ Bring back plenty of smiles and rouge, dear.”

Clairville waved his hand as he went from

me down the stairs. I stood looking at him. Once more he glanced up—a happy joyous smile he gave me ; but mine was sad : very sad I felt.

The next two years were but a withering struggle, and told the same tale of vain regrets—of passions, of feelings, and all the dark, dreadful ills that that heart is heir to, which, like the wandering prodigal, goes forth to seek a refuge and a home amidst the dwelling places of deception and false sentiment. The healthy breeze no longer came wafting purity and peace over the lovely native land of domestic life. Had I then returned, humbly trusting in that Power who knoweth our waking and sleeping thoughts, and considereth of what dust we are made, perhaps even then, afar off, wouldst thou have looked upon me, husband of my youth—wouldst have come out to meet me,—have wept over my wanderings, and have hailed my return with the song and merriment of rejoicing. But no ; a thick, dense veil had mantled all my better

purposes from the breath that might have called them into existence. Even thy confiding, trusting affection could not penetrate it. Not even all thy sorrowing tenderness that watched o'er her, that asked, why thy wife's cheek was pale? why that form was no longer light and rounded? and why smiles, when they came, came more in mockery than joy? But when joy came, how wildly, fearfully bright it shone; it was like the laughing glee of madness. Say not love is an idle tale: it is woman's morning and evening star; rises and sets with all of life. She must either live in its pure domestic atmosphere, or she must sink beneath its lowering.

We had returned to St. Aubin from London; Clarence, too, and Anna, had accompanied us. Ellen had been wedded, and gone away a happy bride with my brother.

"So," said Lady Mary, "that Anna, that Lady St. Aubin, is come back again. I wish Clarence Stewart would marry her, and take her home. I think she is a very artful woman;

and you know, Agnes, I never had much opinion of that little French Nanette ; she is too quick for me. I do not like quick waiting women ; they should be slow to see, and slow to speak. That Anna St. Aubin has too much to say to that flippant French importation."

" Shall I send Nanette away, dear Lady Mary, if you do not approve of her ? I keep her more from habit than partiality."

" No, no, my child ; but be guarded ; don't weep so much when she is near you."

" Weep, Lady Mary ! I do not weep much."

" I am glad of it,—perhaps not ; but we women are strange mysterious beings, weeping most when we ought to be rejoicing. Anna tells Clairville you are always weeping. But she is an artful woman ; artful women have glasses of their own, and read things that are hid from honest ones. Be careful of her ; she of late has been talking too much to Clairville about your wasted figure and your faded beauty.

It sorrows him much; I saw it the other day. He was gazing on that new likeness of yours intently when I entered the room. Agnes, there was a tear in thy husband's eye; yes, on the manly, proud cheek of Clairville. It was a painful sight to an old woman like me, for my tears are all dried now. I do not ask why it fell; but I would wish you to feel it did fall. Remember it. Let it be a gem to make thy heart again deck itself in gayer dress. Yes, Agnes, he looked on it so rapt in musing that he heard not my quiet step. And he spoke to thy painted image in sorrow.

“ ‘How wondrous!’ he said; ‘can that be the glowing bride of a few gone years? Where, where is the canker?—ah!’

“ More, Agnes, I tell thee not. Go, look into the dark, deep caverns of woman's mysterious soul. I told thee erst we were strange, mysterious beings.”

And Lady Mary was gone. I was alone in my dressing-room. “Lady Mary, thy words

have done more than all my own blind, vain reasoning," I said to myself. " Noble, noble Clairville ; and I have drawn a tear from thine eye. Yes, yes ! it shall wash out all the erring of this frail heart."

I wept not now ; I paced my room ; burning thoughts came crowding in ; exhausted, I threw myself on my knees ; I raised my hand, my eyes, my heart, to Heaven, and then, indeed, I wept. I weep not for aught but the wrong I have done to thee. Indeed, indeed I do not. I will wipe these tears away ; I will steel this heart ; I will bid Clarence be gone, gone for ever. Yes, before the throne of that High Power do I register the vow.

I rose from off my knees ; I felt renewed strength in what I was about to do ; I went to the open window to cool my throbbing brow ; and then I said, " I will be gone, I will ; I'll do my duty ere another night."

My husband was beneath my window ; quickly he was pacing to and fro ; Anna was

by his side. I shuddered; a thought struck like an icebolt to my heart; he rushed from her side; his every movement spoke something dreadful; I could not stand; I threw myself on the floor, and covered my face in the sofa; his step was at the door; his hand was on the lock; it was fastened within.

“ Agnes ! Woman ! ”

I could not move. Oh ! that voice ! so terrible. He gave one powerful pressure against the door and was in the room; there I lay; I could not look upon him.

“ Rise, rise, and gaze upon thy victim ! Powers above ! do I live to look upon thee thus, mother of my children ?—must thou go forth a guilty thing ? ”

I rose; I stood before my husband.

“ What meanest thou, Clairville ? My brain, my brain will burst. Look not, look not thus on me ; it is horrible. ”

His face was livid ; his hair wildly tossed ; and those eyes of fondness, red, swollen.

“ Go forth, go forth, thou unholy thing.”

“ Clairville ! what thinkest thou ?”

“ What think I ! I think that thou art *that* I would tremble to breathe even on thine ear.”

“ No, no ! I am not that,—I am not that,” and I laughed wildly. “ I am guilty in heart ; but look, look at this wasted form ; see the faded beauty you were wont to praise, and then learn, my wronged, injured husband, the pangs, the agony, that I have endured, in knowing that I have wronged thee, though but in thought.”

“ In *thought* !” The withering look of that doubt !

“ Yes ! before high Heaven, here on my bended knees I swear it. Take me, take me but to thy bosom once again ; I will be thy faithful, thy fond wife.”

“ Never ! never !”

“ Heavens ! and my children.”

“ Didst thou think of them, false one, when thou wrongedst their father ? Didst thou not swear at the altar of thy God that thou didst

love that father?—love that was never mine, perjured woman. Thou needst not swear it to him—my accursed rival; he has known it from thy infancy; yea, thou needst not have given it back again; it needed not thy words to tell him thou wert unchanged; he read it in thy fainting form. Thou didst deem, didst thou? that he had scorned thee,—and then didst thou swear to love another?”

“Clairville, I stand a guilty thing before thee; but not that guilty thing that false woman would make thee believe.”

The war within could tell how I shuddered at myself. Reptile like, I could have flown and hid me from mortal eye. A stain was on my soul, yet my weak tears could not cleanse it out.

“Yes, Clairville, here I stand before thee, blighted, blasted, by thy scorn. I have deserved much, but not all thou hast given.”

Clairville looked not at me; he was sobbingly drawing his choking breath as he leaned, with his head turned away, on the arm of the sofa.

“ Yes, Clairville, I did love Clarence Stewart devotedly from infancy; he had twined about my very being: we separated, but both were unpledged. I saw thee; I felt I was dear to thee; and with all the enthusiasm of young imagination, thought thee even Clarence Stewart’s superior, as this instant I think—you remember well! And wilt thou not remember it again?” as I approached him, and pressed my hand on his shoulder, “ how thou lovedst, how thou didst win me ?”

“ Agnes! Agnes! go on.”

“ Yes, Clairville, I will confess all here on bended knee; look but at thy wife.”

“ Well, tell on.”

Clairville raised his head, pushed back my hair that hung around me wildly, and looked on my brow.

“ Innocence is here—is it not? speak on, speak on.”

“ My husband, on my knee ask I thee pardon. I did doubt whether all, all my young affections

were thine; but I felt I had gained thine, and that unconsciously I had pledged mine to thee. But this was ere I had supposed Clarence untrue. But I wrote to him to tell him I was to be wedded to thee, and coldness and neglect came back, but not from him. Perhaps I wrong that false woman, when I say it was her revenge. Yes, Clairville, when thou didst desert, didst slight me, I was wretched. You returned. I imagined I loved as I prized thee, and I wedded thee, and I was happy, proudly happy. I confess—yes, Clairville—I confess Clarence came, and that happiness was no longer mine; and I felt like one who wanders beneath amidst a buried city of old—all as gone-by time had left it. I fled from myself; I fled from thee; and I was miserable.”

“ And Clarence has breathed on thy plighted truth,—stained thy pure soul with words of unholy love?”

“ Cannot you forgive *that*? for that is all high Heaven has seen. It was but this hour

had registered in that high Heaven a vow never to meet Clarence again. When thou camest to me, I was going to bid him begone for ever."

"Then thou didst never love me?"

"But I will—I will devotedly, unerringly."

I clung to him ; I wept on his bosom.

"Agnes ! Agnes ! How I dote on thee, even to my own wronging. Leave me, leave me, and go in peace."

I went, and hastened to seek Clarence ; but it was not now in guilty trembling. No ! it was in sweet consciousness that I was following the path of right, whatever it might cost. Though exhausted, and with aching head, I still determined to seek him. Besides, Clairville and he must not meet at this present period : he was not in the house. I asked the servant if he knew where Mr. Stewart was. I happened to look up as I was speaking, and perceived Anna was on the stairs. I started, hesitated, as the servant answered, he was gone in the direction of the fishing-

lodge. But better risk anything than await his return. Still my doubts came when I thought of Anna.

The lodge was some distance from the house. It was the favourite walk of Clairville ; and every object, as I took my way, reminded me of some word of pure, untainted, wedded love.

It was a beautiful evening, though not what is called a fine one. Well I remember every shadow now. They were the last footsteps I ever traced along the woodland path ; that path bore high above a rapid stream ; its banks were now clothed with the first tinting of autumn,—that autumn of my winter of life. The lands on the opposite side of the stream were sloping fields of green,—those fields were now vivid in hue, for the small sunny showers of autumn had been falling there. 'Twas as the washing of repentance, the receiving of brighter hopes.

Up the high lands were to be seen the graceful and clustering hop gardens, now in twining

luxuriance and blossom; while I was leaving behind me many a wooded glade, whose foreground was a high sloping knoll of land, on which rose many a tall and wide-branching tree.

But it was the wild, reckless sky above, now floating in heavy clouds, now sweeping on and shewing spots of dazzling blue that absorbed my attention; again the heavy hue of darkness above bore along the horizon, and the sun came darting from beneath in brilliant light, dancing over brook and brake, and on all around, till the distant land became gorgeous, as gold and crimson, from its setting rays, as they gleamed again in illumination. On before me circled its gaudy arch, the rainbow; that varied, lovely thing of tears, reflecting the gladdening beams, like holy grief, beneath approving Heaven. Covenant of peace, mayst thou tell of promise to this sinning soul? Yes! yes! I will leave a lost world of guilt behind, and now return me in chastened rejoicing.

I reached the lodge deep in the glen, situated

at the mouth of a wide-spreading basin of the brook whose course I had followed. All was quiet. I shuddered when I entered the little room. How often had I and Clairville watched my darling boy, as he threw his tiny rod from out the window, and laughed at his mimic sport. This cherub form seemed to rise before me, and nerve me to my purpose. I heard a step, a well-known step.

“Agnes here, and so pale?”

“Yes, Clarence. What I come for deny me not.”

“Deny thee, Agnes! But why look so wildly?”

“Clarence, we meet now, *never* to meet again.”

Slowly, solemnly, the sound fell. He stood gazing fixedly, stupified.

“Clarence, I loved you once. How well, you too sadly know.”

“Loved me once!—and not now? If it be so, breathe it not again.”

Before God, Clarence, even to dream upon it

is a forbidden thing. Loose not a knot which angel hand has tied; sever not a bond the Almighty has consecrated. It is that Power above who has commanded the deed. Clarence, shall man contend with his mighty Maker's word? We tremble to think that we could err; we feel now, we would not if we could. Could you look upon her thou lovedst in infancy, a creature walking amidst reproach and shame? her existence a very pollution to the earth it inhabited? Clarence, tell *me not*, then, of *thy love*. If thou dost, think what thou makest her thou so tellest. Must I not doubt it, if thou sayest the thing? Degrade, degrade not her who played with thee in joyous innocence. Clarence, there is no degradation like the degradation of self-condemnation. Is the poverty of aught like hers who *dares* not claim the respect of him who loves her? Clarence, how can I tell thee more?—how can I speak more? Thou wilt not keep me in all the self-abasement of erring thoughts! Give me, then,

the security to see me *no more*,—preserve me even at the cost of thine agony,—and then *indeed* thou wilt love ;—yes—thou wilt. You would not but see her husband pardon all her wanderings, and take her back again to that chaste home, his forgiving heart ?”

Clarance was kneeling at my feet. Oh ! the speechless agony of that uplifted glance.

“ Agnes ! never to look upon thee more ! To look upon thee is all I ask. These lips that in boyhood were pressed to thine ; these arms that have so often supported thee. Have we not been cradled in her embrace who loved us both with equal parent fondness ? Though such can never be again, has no monument enshrined their memory ? Pure as thou art, could I dare approach *thee* with unsanctified thought, since thou art the wedded of another ? All I ask, then, is, but to hear thee speak, though not to me ; to look on thee, though thou lookest not on me.”

“ Clarance, unnerve me not. It must not be.”

He paused, — he answered not, — he read firmness in my eye and in my words, for they were in my heart. Then he said,

“ Agnes, hear me !”

“ No, I cannot hear thee again. We part to meet no more.”

“ No more, Agnes ?”

He stopped ; pressed his hand to his temples. His look, his voice ! what a moment was this, as he said,

“ Be it so. Though heart strings burst, yet, yet let me take one last, parting kiss, and ——”

But a fearful sound was heard. It was my husband’s step. Yes ; he was there. A maniac he seemed to stand before my dizzy sight. Something was in his hand.

“ Here, villain, take the life thou hast blasted. Strike, strike sure at the heart thou hast crushed !”

I could see all this, know all this, though my brain was whirling, my form was paralyzed. Clarence took it in his cold hand.

“What! — strike at the life-blood of my husband, the father of my children?”

The pistol fell to the ground; the arm of Clairville was upraised; screaming, I rushed forward; and then on my ear came a sound as of thunder,—the flash, the groan, “oh God!” and Clarence lay there a lifeless thing.

“Begone! begone! Fly, Clairville, fly! thou art a father!”

Did I see more? Yes; another was beside the bleeding form of Clarence, kneeling. Her eye was wild,—her hair around her streaming, drenched; for even Heaven was weeping, and then came a darkening deluge down.

“Out, out! accursed woman!” she said.

I heeded not the frenzied tone, the frenzied stare, of that deep, dark woman.

“Yes, I curse thee. Clarence, beloved Clarence,” she cried.

I put my hand on his pulseless heart.

“Clairville, why stand you there? Fly, fly.”

Still he stood ghastly. The instrument of death was in his hand.

“ Why stand I here ? ”

Horror was in the voice ; dread passion in the fierce eye. Could I live and look upon the frightful sight ? No pity, no mercy told in the rigid cold figure of Clairville. 'Twas the image of despair looking upon a deed of murder. I would have knelt to ask him to fly, but he flung me from him.

“ Out, woman !—Touch me not !—Begone ! or I will tell thee thou *art* the thing I dare not name.”

“ No, I am not—I am not—I am innocent.”

Clarance moved,—he lived,—he raised himself.

“ Not guilty ! not guilty ! with my dying breath I swear thy wife is innocent, innocent as angels of a wrong to thee. By Heaven and with my expiring breath I swear it.”

The deep, dread voice that woke the echo of that lone spot ! He spoke yet again—

“ Anna beside me ! base, murdering woman. Agnes”—my hand was on his fainting lip—
“ Agnes, forgive, forgive — sweet innocent —

thy childhood's playfellow, innocent! innocent!"

And Clairville laughed fearfully.

"No, I will not curse thee."

"No, Clairville! No," I wildly screamed. More I know not;—darkness came over me—a long, long darkness.

DEAREST HENRY,

And you are again returned. Delay not a moment. Come and receive the parting, the last sad farewell of one I would write of, if tears would let me. Yes, I would write and tell all of the dread scene I have just witnessed.

But why should I mourn for thou, dearest brother? Has not thy walk of life ever been overshadowed? Though guided on through its darkness by the powerful strength of thy mind, in vain have we watched thee struggling on. Nothing could silence that inward voice of sorrow, though amidst the competitors of thy

profession, you bore your way towering above them all. Though thy worshipping friends might not give thee earthly immortality, yet a purer spirit hath heard thy prayer of grief. Mercy at last has come down to bear thee on high. Yes, on the wings of a dove shalt thou flee away and be at rest.

Why mourn I, then? for with thy chastening, O Lord, hast thou given a blessing. Yet selfishly, Henry, have I kept that back. Agnes is again restored to us. Yes, your sister is risen again from that dark, drear tomb of mental darkness. She walks, she lives again—a being of acknowledged life.

How can I trace on the scene?—tears blot my words. You remember how our beloved Clarence wrote to tell us of all the noble, generous, forgiving kindness of Clairville. How that precious being, Lady Mary, had worked and linked again in union Clairville and himself. How undoubtingly, but how sadly, he had acknowledged the innocence of thy sweet sister,

though vain was then the voice that owned it. He could no longer charm, though he charmed ever so wisely. No, Agnes; thy soul was wandering amidst a world of thine own; peopled at one hour with phantoms, fit dwellers for the valley of the shadow of death; again with spirits pure as the dwellers of the mansions of light.

I see thee now as I first saw thee in thy night of darkness; as thou satest in all thy paleness. I could not say agony was in that face; no, it was cold, fixed—it was marble. The eye was not wild, but it was expressive; expressive of *that* you could not bear to look upon. What a Magdalene for a painter's inspiration, if genius could have silenced pity into calmness! But no, Agnes; who could have gazed on thee, and have known how to realize thy living image of despair, but despair still visioning beauty?

Again have I beheld that fair creature; yes, she is still fair. The dying request of him who loved her ever in weal or woe had been granted by her husband. I trembled for the effect on our

beloved Clarence. He has never seen her since that dread hour at St. Aubin. But I need not have feared him; something not of human capability appeared to envelop him, and wrap him in a mantle not of earthly weaving.

Calm, collected, resigned, he arrived at Dr. H.'s house. I watched his every movement, but his cheek was not flushed. His frame seemed not even to know that sinking weakness which is bearing him to his grave. Dear, dearest brother! he would have gone alone.

“No, Clarence, torture me not—torture not Ellen,—you will not, my own child?” said our beloved mother.

“Well, as thou wilt.”

He leaned on an arm of each, though he trembled not. But, Henry, Clarence is but a shadow now.

We entered a room; one attendant was with her; yet was she not lonely. No; in wandering imagining she was conversing with her child.

“ Harry, my boy,” she softly said, and I thought how lovely still she looked.

“ Why,” she added, “ art thou robed in these silver wings? art thou going, too, to wander amidst those starry paths above? Clarence is there. We will meet thee—meet thee.”

Then came that idiot laugh.

“ Ha, ha!” she said again; “ it was thy mother murdered him. Talk not of thy father, boy; thy mother wronged him. But I am not thy mother. Yes, yes; do not tell it; he cursed her.”

Then she rose from her humble seat, for she was on the floor. Her hair, that long bright hair, was waving round her, and almost mantled her wasted form. Her eye now told wildly the wanderings of her dreamy life.

Clarence sat him down and looked upon her. She came opposite to him; gazed vacantly, and then, heavens! did that eye now speak aught but madness. He repeated her name—
“ Agnes.”

She stood listening, her finger on her lip. She threw back the locks from off her brow, and raised her glance.

“ No, no, it is not him ; he is above. I will sing to him, and he will answer me.”

That song, Henry ; you know that seraph voice. Her eye again was bent on Clarence. She again sat her down, but at his feet. She took his hand.

“ Thou art come to tell me of him ?”

“ Yes, Agnes,” and he bent over her.

“ Sing to me—sing to me.”

Clarence sang.

“ Hush,” she whispered, “ hush—ah !”

She gazed intently on the face of Clarence as she rose.—The combat of that moment !—Reason was on her throne again. Yes, yes ; there was—there was the life of soul breathing in that look.

“ Speak, speak,” she cried ; “ he lives, he lives !—I have not murdered him.”

She burst into tears,—tears that had never fallen since her blast of happiness. Wildly she

screamed,—frantically Clarence held her to his heart, and then fell back senseless into my mother's arms. She will know thee; he still lives; hasten, hasten to them, beloved.

Ever yours,

ELLEN DORVILLE.

The hand that began shall now finish the tale which a sister's sorrowing might not then do.

She who has written this tale did it not till repentance had purified wrong; till time had mellowed suffering—memory softened reality; and not till that existing reality was breathing peace, purity, calmness, and affection, around her.

Onward to that she will bring you; and as she backward points, tell you that the very thoughts of woman's wedded heart must be ever chaste, or she veils her destiny in clouds.

For two days, they told me, reason again trembled between life and death. I can recall the shadowing of those two days ; see thee, best, noblest of men—husband, father of my children—how thou didst sit beside me ; watched, soothed me ; pointing to the future, bidding me close my eyes for ever on the past, and said I was thy own wife again.

All this was but darkly mine. But another week came, and we were both beside the bed of death. It was he was there ; seraphic calmness was on his brow. I remember what he looked ; I remember every word of that soft, dying voice ; how he spoke comfort to his sobbing mother, to his sister, and to all ; how he fervently clasped the united hands of Clairville and my own—pressed them to his fevered lips ; how powerfully he appealed to Heaven to bless us : but what I felt I cannot tell. Though I received his last sigh, yet how he died I know not ; for I only woke to know it was so. His name is registered on high ; my voice

has never since, never again can breathe its sound.

One spot was there still at St. Aubin to which no path took its way ; its track was lost. It was in that deep glen. There it stood—that ruined lodge ; foot and hand were forbidden to approach it ; voice never broke its desolated solitude ; a wilderness it remained, tokening of a deed of horror, though years had passed and gone.

Time had woven her hours, and again wrought on her surface scenes of happy things. The voice of childhood was echoing again in the halls of St. Aubin ; the fire again was blazing on its hearths. Now no moss was on the steps of its portals ; opened wide again were those portals to gay and laughing ones. So life tides along.

In those halls, though cypress wreaths had long hung their gloom, they were now again

turned into myrtle boughs. Yes; a fair bride and a rejoicing bridegroom were in that hall again. Friends were smiling round them. That wedding time shewed many a kindred united again who had long known loosened bonds. One link alone was not there. When did mortal happiness present an unbroken chain ?

He, the master of that hall, was blest beside his wife and his children. Bertha, that timid, graceful girl, had changed for doll and romp, the book and song; and Harry, that bold, bright boy, for hoop and top, hunter and gun, and listened no longer to nursery tales of giant and midnight fairy, but told of Eton pranks and frolics, and of all that little world of wonder.

And where was she who had sealed this picture of peace, Lady Mary ? She was there talking to Bertha and Harry. The innocent prattlers and herself imaging all that is valuable in years, all that is lovely in youth; the doting parents asking, as they looked upon the picture, for time to lead their offspring thus

from childhood on to age. Nor was good Mrs. Moore forgotten in all this renewed rejoicing, and many were the days she numbered in faithfulness and peace. Mrs. Stewart, too, sat with a laughing cherub on her knees. Edward Stewart had risen high in his profession, an honoured member of the bar; and was the husband of the happy Julia Ormond.

And who were the bride and bridegroom?—Selina and Davenant. They who, but two years gone by, had gazed upon the picture of that laughing girl of gay fifteen, and smiled to look upon her Hebe bloom; had given a tear and a sigh to her in all her unaged sorrow and sadness. But now that blooming bride's first kiss was given to the lady of that picture; the lady's brother, too, the bride's fond parent. And smiling, she said,

“No more sadness, dear aunt; no more India, dear father, dear mother. Let this be our home, loved home, that best of homes—merry England.”

And what of her, that dark, deep woman? To other lands she had gone, and left this memento behind her. It told of another,—but Mrs. Elton was now no more; her idle hour was spent:—

“CLARANCE STEWART,

“‘Spite with spite is best repaid,’ breathed the hero of him who wrote of lost Paradise. I would put it stronger—Hate with hate is best repaid. Take it then.

“Give me a poisoned bowl, till I dip my pen within its deadly gall, and blast thy sight as thou readest. But has it not been blasted? Yes, yes! Thou hast looked upon the madness of that painted puppet of thy soul’s idolatry. Yes! she was mortal, or I could not have worked my task so gloriously.

“Poor idiot thing! Didst thou dream she had deserted thee and thine? How I crumbled and crushed thy words of love and hers, too? Watched them as I thrust them into the flames, and bid them perish in ashes together?

“ I laughed, and said, ‘ True, it is but paper; but it contains their heart of hearts.’ I did it not alone. When I was gone, other eyes observed, other hands withheld; one, for worldly, selfish pride; the other, for dross and dust.

“ Why did I this? Ah! *there, there* rankles still the barbed arrow. When I think upon it, my brain is on fire. What! spurn my proffered love? A fiend is in my heart when I recall that hour, when even on bended knee I stooped and offered thee that burning heart. Yet even then thou couldst not wring the image which mad, doting passion had traced there,—traced from the first moment I beheld thee, boy as thou wert. But no love is here now. No! no! hate stamped in letters of flame, glaring as that which passion once had writ—‘ Am I a murdering one?’ Say again, Yes, I am. It was *I* that penned that death-blow to her hopes. It was I bid *her* go wed another.

“ Dost thou remember how, with flattering and pitying tongue, I told thee she was star

of every eye? and then spoke of him who bore her from thee,—how he whispered of love,—and how she was wont to listen and to smile upon him? How I joyed to see thy cheek bleach beneath the tale, and see thee writhing in an ‘injured lover’s hell.’ And it was *I* that breathed, day by day, unseen, at first unfelt, into a doting husband’s ear, the story of thy unhallowed loves. It was *I* that bid him go in vengeance, and curse the serpent of his bosom. Yet even then I loved thee, and a throb of pity prevailed on my frenzy. I rushed to save thy life and offer mine own honour for its pledge; but thou didst spurn even then.

“And I am satisfied: my victims still live, and I can think upon their misery, their madness. No; I did not want them to die and be spirits above, for then they would have been blessed while I was ——; but what recks it? She that hates as once she loved is *satisfied*, and vengeance has been the reward of

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